For millions of workers around the world, the old gung-ho is gone. They talk and mutter and gripe about their frustrations at work. You don’t even have to listen carefully to hear workers complain about managers, to hear managers complain about workers, and to hear both complain about the company. More than a decade of trying to run leaner and meaner has resulted mostly in meanness, making a shambles out of company loyalty of workers and throwing a blanket of distrust over every boss.

The complaints of most workers are usually about the boss, the infighting, the lack of support, and the boring tasks and restrictive rules and policies. A local beer-company employee expressed the pain, “It’s just a job now, just a job. It used to be fun. When you made deliveries, you were the ‘Pabst man or the Schlitz man,’ and it made you proud. Now it’s dog-eat-dog. The only things that anyone cares about are volume and money.”

**HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM!**
If you want loyalty, get a dog.

—Anonymous

Corporate loyalty no longer exists, faith in the hierarchy and bureaucracy is dead, the distressed employee is replacing the company man, and most organizations are experiencing difficulty in implementing quality improvement programs, simultaneous engineering systems, teams, and an assortment of strategic planning initiatives. The challenge of the decade is how to lead an organization of people who feel abused, feel confused, and don’t want to follow.

What’s happening? Alan Wolfe, a contemporary philosopher, passionately asserts that America, and other cultures as well, have become “decentered.” Not only is life changing, which makes once-appropriate theories and ideals less relevant, but also the changes themselves do not seem to fit any recognizable pattern. Decentering means, simply, that the world around us is losing the center that holds it together and makes sense of living. We are living in a quandary.

**Out-of-Sync Systems**

Sometimes it seems like the whole world of work is out of whack. The company has one agenda, the worker has another, and the manager usually can’t figure out either one. Company policies and procedures get in the way of doing the work in the most efficient manner. Core competencies are not in accord with changing customer needs. Everyone except the worker is defining the way in which work is to be done. Someone always seems to be restructuring someone else. Quality improvement usually ends up meaning doing more, faster, instead of doing less, more profitably. And no one seems sure anymore about what kind of “self-direction” will be rewarded and what will be criticized.

**Living in a Quandary**

Diversity, complexity, and contradiction surround us on every side. We are in the continual predicament of trying to get organized. The consequence, especially in the workplace, is an uneasy state of perplexity and doubt. Quandaries lead to a quagmire of anxiety and confusion. Inside
each of us is a gnawing concern about how to handle daily decisions. Rapidly changing conditions and repeated chaos undermine our confidence in what we should think and do. The toll on all of us is heavy, but on managers and administrators who are supposed to be clarifying the situation and pointing the way, the burden is exceptionally damaging.

**Confusion at Work**

The number one difficulty of effective management today is confusion in the workplace. Following Wolfe’s analysis, it is clear that the complexities of living in organizations mean that old patterns of social life and old expectations about how one will live one’s life at work are replaced, not by new patterns and expectations, but by incoherence and ambiguity. This grappling with puzzling, bewildering, and knotty situations is illustrated perceptively by conversations with a wide range of managers. Listen in on one such discussion:

“How are things going here at Wonderful American Products International?” (Any similarity between this name and an actual company is a one-in-a-million long shot.)

“Pretty good, thanks.”

“What’s the mission of this company?”

“PEP, PEP, and more PEP!”

“What does PEP mean?”

“PEP stands for Productivity, Efficiency, and Profits.”

“One of the PEP boys, huh?” (Bad comment, no laughter; in fact, not even a smile.)

“Those sound like fairly mainstream goals. So what’s the problem?” (Asked in a redeeming tone of voice.)

“The people I manage are dumber than dirt—at least they act like it. They couldn’t care less about productivity, efficiency, and profits, especially profits.” (This particular comment seemed to be quite amusing to the other managers.)

“Frankly, our be-nice-to-employees-and-they-will-be-nice-to-you management approach hasn’t been very effective. They don’t trust us, and, truthfully, I don’t trust them.”

“Empowering first-line managers to make decisions and develop a few strategic planning initiatives has led to almost total chaos and was a huge and costly mistake.”
Wishing to change the subject a little, we asked, “How is employee morale?”

A manager in the midst (or should that be mist?) said, “They are good people. They do their work and get their jobs done.” Over his shoulder another manager commented, “You know, I really don’t know how they feel. All right, I guess.”

Leaning against a machine, a third manager urged, “Why don’t you go and ask them?”

As a matter of fact, we did act on the suggestion and talked to quite a large number of employees. We were not surprised to find that they, indeed, weren’t too happy about their circumstances, but they needed the jobs and were not anxious to quit. Strangely enough, when we asked them what they thought of their bosses, almost unanimously and without much hesitation, they said that their bosses were “JERKS!”

In a recent survey, employees of a high-tech aerospace manufacturer were asked, “What is keeping you from achieving your goals at work?” The clear-cut majority of respondents said that it was “management and team leaders” who were the source of their problems, and the company had too many chiefs.

Adding Misery to Confusion at Work

As part of his introduction to Working, Studs Terkel characterized a second fierce problem plaguing modern organizations. He said, “This book, being about work, is, by its very nature, about violence—to the spirit as well as to the body.” Workers sing both the blue-collar blues and the white-collar moan. The two factors that contribute most to the blues and the moans are the work itself and the manager.

As Komarovsky so poignantly describes in her account of the Blue-Collar Marriage, the kind of work one is allowed to do serves as the foundation of economic deprivations, anxiety about the future, a sense of defeat, and a bleak existence: “The low status of the job, in addition to low pay and unfavorable working conditions, is a frequent source of dissatisfaction…. Daily life is a constant struggle to meet the bills for rent, groceries, a pair of shoes, a winter coat, and the TV set and the washing machine.”

For the white-collar worker, Freudenberger, a prominent psychiatrist, has captured the dread of work in his impelling treatment of Burn Out: “Many men and women who come to me in pain report that life seems to
have lost its meaning. Their enthusiasm is gone. They feel uninvolved, even in the midst of family and friends. Their jobs, which used to mean so much, have become drudgery with no associated feeling of reward.”

Exhaustion from intense mental concentration, long hours in routine and repetitive tasks, and constant changes in tasks already completed lead to cynicism, irritability, paranoia, and mistrust of others. The demand to achieve more with less and less catapults us into voids of anguish and precipitates sudden outbursts of emotional energy designed to relieve us of the pressure of work, work, work.

Ripping Faces Off People

Scott and Hart, prominent authors in organizational theory and philosophy, place this malaise in the context of the “insignificant people.” They argue that organization members are ruled by a managerial elite who, in order to maintain their place as rulers, must convince members of the workforce that, in relationship to the organization, the individual is insignificant. Workers are told how valuable they are, but they are then treated as invaluable and told to “quit if you don’t like it here.” The goal of managers seems to be to indoctrinate the workforce to understand and accept their insignificance in relation, particularly, to the superior goals of the system.

Further, misery and confusion arise because of the need in modern organizations to educate more members of the workforce to handle the increasingly more sophisticated demands of their jobs. Thus, even though the training may be simply technical, it encourages people to think. Thinking tends to lead people to reflect on the nature of their jobs. As they increase in technical expertise, they may recognize how dull, routine, and monotonous their work is and how antiquated the mindset of their bosses really is in this modern era.

*The first rule of holes is when you’re in one, stop digging!*

—Anonymous

Managers Have Huge Blind Spots

One of the most distressing patterns in modern organizations is the apparent and long-standing view that managers fail to recognize that employees are human beings who may be suffering at their hands. Time after time,
employees report in interviews and respond to surveys with essentially the same concern: People develop blind spots when they become managers.

**Jaundiced Eyes**

We’ve seen quite a bit of this yellow discoloration of the eyes in universities. When a faculty member is dragged, kicking and screaming, into the position of department chair, his or her initial understanding of problems is comfortably comparable with that of other faculty members. After being in the position for a few weeks or months, an alarming change occurs. The new chair seems to forget entirely what concerns he or she had as a faculty member. In only a short period of time, the new chair appears to exhibit a startling disregard for faculty concerns and a high regard for his or her new boss. Similarly, the move from worker to manager appears to short-circuit new managers’ critical synapses so as to help them forget how little they really trusted their managers when they were workers. They forget how difficult it was to be listened to, much less how important it was to be rewarded and valued for their ideas.

How soon we forget that freedom is important in the lives of workers. Why do managers become consumed with the idea that they must direct and control the lives of others if they are to move up the corporate ladder?

After reviewing shifts occurring in business environments, Brandt observed that “unique events are increasingly the norm; at least they are common. And the correct responses are one-offs. *All the control systems can do in most companies is hamper the development of appropriate replies by the members of the enterprise.* Management heritage is aimed at order, not inventiveness or responsiveness.”

The painful emphasis on control by managers led Macleod to identify factors that make employees feel like they are prisoners of the firm. They have little or no choice in their work lives. The range of options is very limited and the workers have little control over the conditions under which they work. They thus feel trapped and imprisoned. Additionally, like prisoners, they are under the control of people in authority who make decisions at their own convenience and by their own choice. There are rigid and arbitrary rules. Infractions of the rules are punished severely. Employees quickly learn about the negative consequences of disobeying or even speaking up in opposition to the orders, rules, and norms of the corporate culture.

Employees are also regulated by imposed time schedules and unwaivering routines. Specified starting times at work dictate when the individual
rises, has breakfast, and leaves for work. The worker may also need to meet a fixed train, bus, or commuter schedule both before and after work. The employee’s time may almost be completely regulated from rising on Monday morning to arriving home on Friday evening. At one prominent company, employees are asked to work at least 50 hours each week. Commuting time takes an hour to get to work and another hour to return home. The train schedule adds an additional hour, and lunchtime tacks on another hour. Employees devote about 70 hours to work each week. Incredibly, this company takes great pride in advancing family values and encouraging employees to spend more time with their families.

At work, employees may be deprived of their individuality, be separated from their family and friends, occupy offices and quarters that have a lack of privacy, and labor in unpleasant physical conditions in workstations with limited space. The temperature, humidity, and cleanliness of the air is carefully controlled for computer equipment rather than for employees. Finally, appraisal systems implemented by powerful people who have secondhand, sketchy, and often inaccurate information, but whose decisions are final, may have a decisive and highly negative effect on employees’ futures.

No wonder employees watch the clock, daydream, and expect little stimulation from the workplace. On the job, they only do what seems absolutely necessary, stay out of trouble, and try not to rock the boat.

**Old Management Logic**

Despite all the rhetoric about new age management styles, managers, as well as too many others, are still locked into an elitist, outdated “management logic.” The old management logic runs something like this: The ideal system for creating products and delivering services is to take human beings and coerce them into following a specific set of procedures that hopefully minimize the risk of failure. At the same time, managers can pursue other policies that mold, shape, change, and control workers on the misguided assumption that management is responsible for making decisions for them.

At first glance, this doesn’t seem like a terribly bad approach, at least for managers. In practice, however, it is fraught with difficulties. The first difficulty stems from having employees perform the same procedures day in and day out, week after week. Employees become bored out of their minds because they are not able to use their minds. Soon morale declines, energy levels dip, and in fact workers begin to discover ways to impede the work and strike back at managers and the company to compensate for
the mindless, insensitive ways in which they are being treated. They
begin to feel frustrated, tired, and imprisoned. Isn’t it interesting that
managers trap themselves in this old management logic and then turn
right around and trap their workers in the same mindset?

The second difficulty that comes from following traditional manage-
ment logic is that the demands on management make it impossible for
them to figure out new procedures for workers to follow when the mar-
ket changes. Thus, changing customer needs, the development of new
technologies, and widespread decentering can’t be responded to in order
to ensure maximum profits and implant a no-failure effort.

Managers have tried in the past to keep employees interested in their
work by such practices as rotating them from one job to another. Rotation
doesn’t work very well, because each job quickly becomes boring and
doesn’t use the workers’ potential any better than the first one. When
rotating workers resulted in even more complexity and contradictions,
managers were urged to add more variety and depth to the work.
Unfortunately, the variety is limited and the depth is restricted to fit the
company’s already existing rules, regulations, and processes. So, that
doesn’t help very much. It leads again to the popular metaphor of the
workplace as a prison.

An Old View Restated

Workers are human beings who are ready to contribute to the company.
They are intelligent and caring. They work, laugh, and cry like the rest of
us. They have hearts and souls. They want to use more than just their
hands to make the organization successful. They want to devote their
minds, courage, wisdom, and spirit to helping the organization do its very
best. The challenge, as managers, is to figure out how to release the ener-
gy of workers in order to encourage them rather than discourage them.

For employees, workplaces should be quite different from prisons,
not only for the sake of the employees, but for the sake of better corpo-
rate competitiveness, effectiveness, and success.

The difficulties won’t be easy to overcome, but it will be worth the
try. Remember, you can only downsize so far before you go out of busi-
ness. Costs can be cut only so much before profit margins start to flat-
line. And one final thing is for sure—you will never get things right if you
keep separating profitability concerns from people concerns.
Teams: The Panacea?

Some consultants have suggested that we put workers into teams to solve the problems of low productivity, quality, and morale. As Musselwhite and Moran point out, that seems to ease the pain for a while, but eventually teams begin to wear off and the same difficulties return.

We don’t want to parade out all of the latest research on the failure of teams and other techniques, but we just reviewed a report from employees of a rather large healthcare operation. When asked to rate the effectiveness of their teams, these healthcare employees rated them about 40 percent effective. Obviously, they were underwhelmed by teams. Some organizations have abandoned teams and reverted to various forms of discussion and problem-solving groups. Incidentally, most teams ultimately fail in organizations because the work of the organization doesn’t require people to work in teams.

A New View Restated

At some point we need to stop running from one management fad to the next, from one management philosophy to another, and move forward by going back to the fundamentals of managing people so that they feel valued and significant. At the risk of sounding too idealistic, we believe that it is possible to change what’s going on inside of our heads by listening more carefully to our souls and leading a little more from the heart than from some set of unnatural prescriptions for management success. If we don’t change, we’ll continue to have more days like this humorous sign describes:

There are days when as soon as you open your eyes, you know you are in over your head.

—From Me Mum Sez

We had to chuckle a little bit when one of our manager friends replied to an inquiry about how his work was going. His voice rose about an octave, actually just short of a scream, and he said something to the effect that “it’s an H-E-double-hockey-sticks-week at work. Stress doesn’t begin to cover what I’m experiencing. I’m lucky if I can squeeze in lunch and a call to my wife. When I finally get home, it’s well after dark, and I’m so incredibly cranked up that I can’t get to sleep.”
Hell-week-at-work accompanied by new responsibilities and a plethora of new management techniques is not uncommon in today’s organizations. New buzzwords pop up almost every day: diversity, time-to-market, collaborative individualism, 360-degree appraisals, de-jobbing, right-sizing, flexible compensation, internal strategies, and so forth.

Place all of this in the middle of a decade of downsizing, mergers, plant closings, leaner-meaner managerial organizations, restructuring and reorganizing, and it’s no wonder that managers begin to question their own sanity about whether they should continue on as managers, or why they even became managers in the first place.

Deep down inside of each manager is a desire to feel more joy and serenity while at work. At the same time, managers realize that a multitude of personalities, talents, and skills must properly mesh if their business enterprise is going to succeed. At the end of a particularly frustrating day, many ask themselves, “Isn’t there a better way? Is this really what management is all about? Am I truly enjoying what I am doing?”

At the present time, managers seem more confused and befuddled than they have ever been. Although their knowledge of management processes and techniques is greater than ever, this knowledge is, in a way, less satisfactory, for in every direction they are faced with contradictions, clouded issues, and immense ambiguity.

We are reminded of the debate about the difference between management and leadership and whether you can have one without the other. The cry on one side is to build brilliant competitive strategies, while on the other side people are urging, “Don’t compete with anyone, focus on your customers.” At a time when some companies are touting TQM, others are writing articles about why TQM doesn’t work. To top it all off, we just read a document about how identifying and building upon “core competencies” can hinder a company’s progress! What is the world of management coming to?

Managers find themselves in a position where the world has become so complex that they know very little outside their own areas. Explosions in technology, new forms of analysis, and sophisticated systems of doing business are usually only known by the people directly engaged in those activities.

Managers frequently hold meetings with other managers and administrators and try to make decisions about how employees should do their work and how problems should be solved. To make matters worse, they often spend hours encouraging each other to believe things that they don’t know a lot about and to develop policies and directions that won’t work.
Chapter 1 • Houston, We Have a Problem

Synergistic Ignorance

We call this phenomenon synergistic ignorance: the development of enthusiasm for plans from people who simply don’t know, who have pooled their ignorance behind closed doors and developed a set of directions, rules, and guidelines that are supposed to help guide a group of frustrated employees who know more about the operations and their areas of expertise than do the managers.

Cheer Up!

This state of affairs should not be discouraging. On the contrary, it can be extraordinarily stimulating. Unrest provides the fuel for change and revolution. Our difficulties can be resolved by letting our imaginations and common sense construct and identify a few certain things that every manager can do to tap into the unused power of organizations. Managers and workers together have the power to turn organizations upside down and bring harmony and direction out of chaos. As you proceed forward in your quest, please keep in mind that failing to use the immense and unlimited potential of individual workers is extremely wasteful and is a travesty to society, to the organization in which the individual works, and to the individual.

As a tentative first step, we suggest that everybody—employees and managers alike—try “softer” rather than “harder.” Ponder this oriental fable for a clue:

A young man traveled across Japan to the school of a famous martial artist. When he arrived at the dojo, he was given an audience by the sensei.

“What do you wish from me?” the master asked.
“I wish to be your student and become the finest karateka in the land,” the young man replied. “How long must I study?”
“Ten years at least,” the master answered.
“Ten years is a long time,” said the young man. “What if I studied twice as hard as all your other students?”
“Twenty years,” replied the master.
“Twenty years! What if I practiced day and night with all my effort?”
“Thirty years,” was the master’s reply.
“How is it that each time I say I will work harder, you tell me that it will take longer?” the young man asked.
“The answer is clear. When one eye is fixed upon your destination, there is only one eye left with which to find the way.”
So it is with many things! The harder we try, the poorer the result and the more frustrated we become. This seems to be particularly true when working with people. The day-to-day effort of trying to keep everyone and everything moving forward while at the same time trying to meet your special commitments as managers, supervisors, and administrators often leaves you breathless and fatigued.

**Yes, Houston, We Do Have a Problem**

But unlike Apollo XIII, it is not an oxygen problem. We know that the problem is low worker morale, lost faith in the bureaucracy, and failure to take innovative actions to improve management practices. Over the years, we have surveyed Fortune 500 companies about their human resource practices (Stephan, Ralphs, Mills, and Pace). In our last survey of 300 managers, the most frequently reported difficulties they experienced were motivating workers to take more responsibility for their jobs, taking care of customers, making prudent decisions, being more innovative, and correcting mistakes without running to the boss for advice and direction on every issue.

Managers reported that they felt like they had to overmanage just to keep everyone going. But the more managers managed, the less initiative employees took. Inadvertently, managers found themselves worrying more and working harder and longer trying to meet productivity and efficiency goals. The managers found themselves trapped in a vicious cycle they hated. The more they managed, the less enthusiastic the employees were about using their own brainpower. The ultimate irony of all of this is that managers frequently feel just as frustrated as the employees.

Fortunately, because managers play such an important role in the lives of workers and are the single greatest influence on the job performance and satisfaction of workers, managers can pretty much clean up this mess by helping workers take more responsibility for winding themselves up each day and feeling more confident about making valuable contributions to the organization’s success. You, as the manager, are the employees’ only hope. You can buffer them from much of the organization’s chaotic machinations and the accompanying confusion and drudgery at work.

When fellow workers are allowed, encouraged, and enabled to contribute their ideas, hearts, and hands more fully to the success of the organization in which they work, morale goes up, productivity increases,
more prudent decisions are made, and collaboration is strengthened. Best of all, your efforts to help employees stand on their own two feet and feel more confident at work will allow you to worry less about what they are doing and spend more time doing what you need to do. And, of course, play a little more golf!

A close friend of ours was just made a senior manager in a large media organization. When he asked the president of the corporation for advice, the president gave him three succinct suggestions: Make a profit. Be honest. And have fun! The new senior officer realized that he could not achieve this interesting mandate by himself. Employees would need to share their ideas, dreams, and hopes in order to make a profit; they would need to have confidence in the company in order to make honest decisions; and they would need to feel more enthusiastic about their work in order to have fun.

His first challenge was to infuse confidence into his fellow workers by eliminating organizational restrictions that might inhibit their best efforts. He didn’t waste much time in doing everything he could to show employees that they were free to improve the business.

If you want to fire up your people and get them more involved in sharing their ideas, like our senior management friend, we suggest that you do three things:

First, call a meeting of all employees and explain that they are to try out new ways of doing their work, without fear of penalties for fouling up.

Second, announce a policy that promotions will be based on demonstrated abilities to help and coach other employees.

Third, enthusiastically accept changes in their work and support them in their decisions.

Gradually, you will be able to withdraw from attending meetings where employees are making decisions. The momentum will begin to shift. Teams of employees will take responsibility for managing their own jobs. You will have time to meet with employees, treat them more friendly, and coach them to improve their work. Your life will become simpler as decisions are made closer to the work itself.

The Japanese have a wonderful saying: “Better to have many engines pulling the train than to have one engine pulling the train.” Leadership is not for the few anymore, but for the many. Literally tens of thousands of supervisors, managers, and administrators are searching for ways to “spread engine power” among their employees, and at the same time,
uncomplicate their own lives as managers. Unlike Apollo XIII, the spacecraft doesn’t have to be brought down and relaunched. What you have to do, however, is rethink and retool your present management approach to focus your energies on helping employees seize responsibility for their own work, which will unleash the power of organization members and the workforce.

**Houston, We Have a Solution**

In this small but insightful book, we will describe and advocate seven essential changes that you can make in your style of managing that will transform you into a powerful leader. Managers who have made these seven essential changes have noticed that their employees quickly lost their fears about raising thorny issues and “rocking the boat.” Organizational members gained confidence in their abilities to confront problems and resolve them. The managers were pleasantly surprised to find that employees were able to streamline their work, reduce costs, and make their work more enjoyable. In addition, they discovered that they had more time and energy to do their work. The managers were on the path to powerful leadership.

Now, we’ll provide an overview of the seven essential changes that will help you to become a powerful leader. These seven essential changes free you to do your own work better, with fewer complications and with more personal satisfaction.

The First Essential Change frees your immediate reports—employees—from every unnecessary rule, process, procedure, and constraint that prohibits them from making changes in their own work to improve the efficiency of the workplace. We just talked to a manager at one of the top three computer companies in America. He said that workers sometimes refer to coming to work as “day prison.” This perception is prevalent in hundreds of organizations throughout the world and needs to be changed as quickly as possible.

Rene McPherson, CEO of Dana Corporation, pared down its bureaucracy by cutting 350 people from the corporate staff of 500 and replaced a 17-inch set of standard operating procedures with a slim, concise policy statement. He stopped over 400 pages of management reports each month and prohibited managers from sending memos to their subordinates so that they had to meet face to face, and he removed all time clocks
from the premises. He said that he didn’t believe in corporate procedures
because they were counterproductive and restricted the flexibility of peo-
ple to cope with the unpredictable.

Managers tend to overmanage their employees. This practice creates
more work for the manager and imposes severe constraints on workers.
Overmanaging means that you are not allowing your employees to take
the lead. You can free yourself up by freeing up your employees.

The Second Essential Change helps employees engage in more cre-
ative thinking and carry out more innovative actions. Most top executives
realize that innovation is the key to survival. Making unique, interesting,
exciting, and profitable changes is what keeps a company competitive.
Unfortunately, few managers are taught how to release their own great
creative potential and lead employees to experiment with innovations.
Getting employees to examine their own work creatively and innovative-
ly places the emphasis where it belongs. Harold Geneen, ITT’s excep-
tionally successful CEO for many years, says that good ideas are hard to
come by and “I always felt that as chief executive, it was incumbent upon
me to welcome and foster creative thinking.” Most top managers say that
the most wasteful time you can spend is trying to get employees to do
things well that shouldn’t be done at all.

The Third Essential Change switches your relationship with employ-
ees from that of “boss” to that of cohort. The simplest truism in the world
of leadership is that it is a lot easier to lead a friend than an enemy! And
much less complicated. Roberto Goizueta, the CEO of Coca Cola, feels
that to get people to do their best, you have to know them; bosses should
not be regarded as gods, because they aren’t. He described his manage-
ment style with the acronym of CIO—coordinator, integrator, orchestrator.
Goizueta, like so many very effective executives, spends much time
counseling, teaching, coaching, and developing management talent, real-
zizing that this talent is Coca Cola’s greatest asset.

John Stollenwerk, president of Allen-Edmonds Shoe Corporation,
ever uses the term employee. He says he works at the plant just like any-
body else. There are no reserved parking places for Allen-Edmonds work-
ers, including the president, who had to park a great distance from the
main door of the plant because he was late getting to work.

The Fourth Essential Change shifts managers’ focus from delegating
and trying to motivate people to the more powerful concept of “involv-
ment” by mastering an energizing and dynamic approach that we call the
4E’s of Involvement: envisioning, enabling, energizing, and ensuring
results. As chairman and CEO of 3M, Allan Jacobson says that managers
shouldn’t be too narrow in their focus. They should “get other people active in and supporting your plans in order to make them real.” You have to have a lot of people doing the right thing to get the job done.

When you have tried a thousand ways to motivate and reward people and you find out that people really aren’t increasing their productivity in any significant way, you may want to alter your management style to incorporate the more natural 4E’s approach for involving people.

The Fifth Essential Change helps managers avoid criticism and reprimands and moves them to the almost magical approach of applause and redirection. Criticism is absolutely useless in the workplace and reprimands have always been associated with punishment. Applauding and redirecting is definitely more useful and less harmful to employees. Robert Haas, CEO of Levi Strauss & Co, explains that his job is to create an environment for employees in which they feel that they can contribute, that their ideas are heard, that their opinions are taken into account when decisions affecting them are made, and that they understand the importance of their contributions to business success. Haas emphasizes listening rather than telling, and this listening should be accompanied by a relentless curiosity directed toward making things better. Being critical of others is totally antithetical to powerful leadership.

When Robert Kirby was CEO of Westinghouse Electric Corporation, he reflected on the old style of management and observed that a few years ago, a manager would fire you on the spot if you told him or her you had lost five million dollars. Then, the next time you made an error, you wouldn’t go and tell the manager. That’s no way to run a company. When people came to Kirby with bad news, it was his job to help them out, not ship them out. The manager should be the repository for bad news rather than the employees’ worst critic.

The Sixth Essential Change insists that managers take the high road in making decisions. Taking the high road is the simplest way to restore trust and good will between the manager and workers and among the workers themselves. And, of course, save the company from a pile of legal troubles and lawsuits. Robert Haas of Levi Strauss does not do business in countries with lists of human rights violations. He has an unprecedented affirmative action policy and an outstanding employee benefits package that supports his “high road” approach to employees. As CEO of Phillips Petroleum, Pete Silas imbued the company with the spirit of volunteerism, encouraging employees to be involved in community activities and permitting workers to take time off from work to participate. He considers involvement in local communities to be a corporate responsibility. Taking
the high road in both personal and workplace decisions is critical to exercising powerful leadership.

The Seventh Essential Change places managers on the peaceful path. A powerful leader has a willingness to confront adversity and the ability to deal with it calmly. Powerful leaders strengthen themselves so that they don’t become fatigued and overwhelmed while trying to be effective. Walter Williams, CEO of Rubbermaid, says that being physically fit pays off for a manager’s mindset. If you stay in good shape, you are going to be healthier, more astute, and more tuned in. Kay Koplovitz, CEO of USA Network, is an avid camper and hiker and prefers to spend her off-hours in the wilderness. She feels that when you get away from what you do every day, you come back much more relaxed. As CEO of Westinghouse, Paul Lego engaged in a number of practices to ensure time for himself to strengthen his mental and physical well-being. For example, he rose at 4:45 a.m. and ran every other day. He got a lot of ideas as he ran and actually had time to think them through. While John Hall was CEO of Ashland Oil, he maintained a robustness by speed walking, weightlifting, and golfing—mostly playing golf. He set a less hectic pace than other CEOs and encouraged employees to have a more balanced family life. Making this essential change is really the key to personal survival and peace of mind, both at work and in daily living.

Managers who are willing to make these seven small changes in their management style can significantly improve employee performance and morale, and at the same time uncomplicate their own lives as managers. In fact, we always chuckle a little when managers report that by implementing these seven essentials, they have eliminated most of their “brilliant management failures!” Allen Jacobsen, CEO of 3M Corporation, says that 3M looks for people who have a fairly good balance between work, family, and community. In addition, he feels that his father’s statement, “Provide your own leadership,” is sound advice.

Powerful leaders regularly implement these seven essential changes. You too can increase your influence as a powerful leader by following their example.