

Leadership & Passion

The Five Keys to Passion

"Key #1 - The Discovering Process: Passionate people have discovered work that excites them.

Key #2 - The Designing Process: Passionate people find ways to make their lives exciting, meaningful, and special.

Key #3 – Risking: Risk is an important part of living passionately.

Key #4 – Learning: Passionate people are always learning, reinventing themselves, and exploring new things.

Key #5 - Building Self-Efficacy: The belief that we have about our ability to do something (Boverie & Kroth, 2001, p. 63-65)."

Reference: Boverie, P.E. & Kroth, M. (2001). Transforming work: the five keys to achieving trust, commitment and passion in the workplace. Cambridge MA: Perseus Publishing.

As our 2008 US Presidential campaign continues on toward the election in nears November, I am continually awed by the number of polls, pundits and talking heads who endlessly try to discover what it is Americans want in their next president. The information from TV, radio, newspapers and the internet can be an overwhelming deluge if not carefully screened. However just the other night, I was listening to one of those pundits who finally said something that made me pause. He said that the American people want to be inspired; they want to see someone with passion. I had to think for a second, does that statement apply to me, and unequivocally, I answered yes. But what is passion? How do you demonstrate passion for something like a job, or an organization, or a team, aside from the foam finger, team jersey, or baseball hat kind of passion? Boverie and Kroth (2001) give a great outline.

Passionate people have discovered work that excites them. When you wake up each day and think about going to work, are you energized? Are you ready to jump in full throttle? Or do you approach the day with a bit more reticence? In today's fast paced society it may be hard to remember why we do the work that we do, or why we started down a particular path. However, in examining those questions, we may reconnect with that passion that first led us to the work we do. However, sometimes we cannot reconnect with passion for our work, what are we to do then? In those cases, it is so important for leaders to find work that excites their minds. Maybe you find a cause that is close to your heart for which you can volunteer your time, one that ignites a fire in you. Maybe you get involved with a group in your community whose work falls closely in line with your passions. Those are all ways that as leaders we can fulfill the first key to passion- discovering work that excites us.

When the alarm clock rings Monday mornings do you look forward to a week filled with activities? The second key to passion is to find a way to make your life meaningful, exciting, and special. Do we find time in our schedules for activities that provide meaning or excitement to our lives? This key goes hand in hand with the first, discovering work that excites us. The easiest way to inject meaning and excitement into our lives is to have professional or personal pursuits that excite us. Community work or a charitable cause, volunteering with our children, or the groups in which they are involved, are all ways we can focus on the things that mean the most to us. In addition, making time to be with those that are near and dear to us will fill our days with special moments for which many of us continue to look.

Bungee jumping, sky diving, and public speaking make the list of top fears of individuals today; the things that make people sweat! But what do they have to do with leadership? To take a risk, or to undertake something that may make us uncomfortable, is an important part of living with passion. This isn't to say that you have to run out and find the nearest sky diving school to enhance your leadership abilities. Risking can be as simple as looking at a situation where a decision is required and taking the road less traveled. Strong leaders know when they should follow a traditional path, and when looking at the big picture, a calculated risk could raise their team to the next level of efficiency or cohesion. As a leader, reflect on your own leadership situation and find some areas where a calculated risk may provide a breath of fresh air. Can you make a change in your decision making process? Develop a new product? Expend precious resources in a new, emerging area? Whatever the case may be for you, leave your comfort zone, check the situation and take the risk!

When is the last time you picked up a book or newspaper with the intention of learning something new? Are you a stranger to the classroom- formal or otherwise? Does the idea of innovation make you a little nervous? The fourth key of infusing passion into your leadership and into your life is to make yourself a lifelong learner, by reinventing yourself and exploring new ideas. As a child of the 1980s, when I hear the word reinvention, I think of Madonna, the multi-platinum pop icon. Since she first burst onto the scene, almost 3 decades ago, she has continually reinvented herself by changing her appearance, her sound, and the way that she presents her art. Whether you like what Madonna puts into the popular culture or not, it would be hard to argue that she is not a master of reinvention! Leaders are also masters of reinvention. Probably not to the level that Madonna is, that might be more disconcerting than passionate. However, in committing to be a lifelong learner and exploring new ideas, you literally reinvent yourself as a new leader with your new knowledge. This key also ties in closely with our first key- finding work that excites you. Discovering new knowledge could be the very catalyst that allows you as a leader to find work that excites you and leads to your reinvention.

The final key to injecting passion into your leadership style is to build self efficacy. But what does that really mean? Self efficacy is the deeply rooted belief that as individuals, we have the ability to do something. When you are in the role of team member, or follower, how comfortable are you when the leader of the group does not have self confidence? For example, how would

you feel if our President, in his next State of the Union address, stood in front of the nation and said that he had no idea what to do to help our country move forward? Or worse, what if he said that he had some ideas, but that he wouldn't voice them because he thought they were terrible? We would probably be fearful that this person could not take our country in a positive direction. In our own leadership situations it is very much the same. We as leaders need to believe that we have the ability to lead. We have talked about several ways to continue to enhance our abilities throughout our own leadership journey. Knowing that we are doing all we can to improve our skills, we then just take a simple step forward and believe that we can lead efficiently and effectively.

Passion is an important part of inspiring others to follow our leadership path. How can you infuse passion into your leadership journey?