



# Mpowerment Matters

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Management Mpowerment Associates

Forward to a Colleague



**David Sorin, CEO**  
**Management Mpowerment Associates**

Company leaders need to be visionaries. You must develop a clear picture of where you are taking your company. You need to see how all of the actions of each of your employees will propel you in the right direction. And, in order to ensure that your team knows what that direction is, you have to be crystal clear in your communication of the vision and the direction all must take to achieve.

Management Mpowerment Associates will help you bring your vision into focus. We will work closely with you to enable you to spread the vision throughout your company, and to help each employee recognize how his or her work helps the company achieve the vision. Everyone's work is important to the company, and it all ties in to the big picture. Giving meaning to everyone's work, creating goals that tie into company goals - this is all part of achieving clarity. True leaders achieve clarity and their companies achieve greatness.

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## **The Case for Clarity: A Key Leadership Quality**

*"Effective leaders don't have to be passionate. They don't have to be charming. They don't have to be brilliant... They don't have to be great speakers. What they must be is clear. Above all else, they must never forget the truth that of all the human universals - our need for security, for community, for clarity, for authority, and for respect - our need for clarity, when met is the most likely to engender in us confidence, persistence, resilience, and creativity."*

— Marcus Buckingham  
in *The One Thing You Need to Know...about Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success*, Free Press, 2005.

When top executives make short, clear statements about their customers, core strengths, desired future and action plans, they prevent employee confusion and anxiety. They generate confidence throughout the organization through clarity, replacing uncertainty with resilience.

Warren Bennis, founding chairman of the Leadership Institute at USC's Marshall School of Business, once noted that he found more than 800 definitions of leadership. Every leader is unique, but each shares similar "ingredients," as Bennis refers to key characteristics:

- A guiding vision
- Passion
- Integrity (to include self-knowledge, candor and maturity)
- Curiosity

- Caring

Leadership and management guru Marcus Buckingham, quoted in this article’s introduction, sums it up as follows: “*Great leaders rally people to a better future, by discovering what is universal and capitalizing on it.*” Preoccupation with the future and the ability to communicate one’s vision with clarity drive leadership, he asserts.

This does not mean great leaders are primed to outperform your competitors, increase productivity or help others achieve success; rather, they are dissatisfied with the status quo, envision a better future and strive to share it with others to achieve success. Great leaders clearly appreciate current challenges and believe they have what it takes to conquer them and forge ahead.

### **Great Managing Versus Great Leading**

Every manager’s starting point is the individual employee. Managers must assess talents, skills, knowledge, experience and goals to design a specific future that fosters each employee’s personal success. No manager can excel without hiring good people, setting clear expectations, recognizing and praising excellence, and demonstrating a sense of caring.

Great leaders play a different role from that of managers: They begin with an image of the future. They then focus their attention on persuading others that success awaits within this vision.

### **Five Basic Fears and Needs**

Every leader quickly learns that most people have some basic fear when confronted with uncertainty—and the future is always uncertain. Leaders must consequently find a way to guide people through uncertainty and change.

Anthropologists and scientists, in fact, have discovered five basic fears that are universal, each of which correlates with a basic need:

<b>Fear</b>	<b>Correlated Need</b>
Death (our own and our family's)	Security
The outsider	Community
The future	Clarity
Chaos	Authority
Insignificance	Respect

*Source: Donald E. Brown in Human Universals (1991)*

The most essential fear leaders must confront is fear of the future. They must find ways to engage employees’ fears of the unknown and transform them into a vision for a better future. Clarity is the tool used to accomplish this.

### **Four Points of Clarity**

Clarity in leadership applies to four key areas:

1. **Whom do we serve?** Who are your customers? How can you define them based on what they want and/or need from you? Compiling information from customers enables you to craft a vivid customer definition to help employees understand their concerns and values.
2. **What is our core strength?** By defining your organization’s core strength, you educate your employees

about how they will prevail in the future, using their edge to best competitors despite any obstacles.

- 3. What is our core score?** To ensure clarity, avoid measuring several employee behaviors or skills at once. Senior management can track several scores, but leaders must define only the most important core score for employees to achieve focus. Make sure the selected behavior falls under employees' control, as they must have the power to influence their scores.
- 4. What actions can we take today?** Symbolic action occurs when a particular goal is achieved to create confidence and success. Systematic actions include new activities that focus on the needs of customers, highlight core strengths, and lead to success on core metrics.

### How Do the Best Leaders Achieve Clarity?

All leaders develop certain disciplines to help them achieve greater clarity. Here are a few suggestions from Buckingham:

- 1. Take time to reflect.** Most great leaders take some time out of their busy schedules for reflection. This time dedicated to thinking is incredibly valuable, allowing high-performing leaders to achieve remarkable success, in spite of complexity.
- 2. Select your heroes with great care.** The individuals you recognize and celebrate become role models for others. Look to the people and events that you want others to emulate. When you recognize a high-achieving performer, be explicit in your recognition by explaining how he or she helped bring the desired future one step closer.
- 3. Practice.** Discipline yourself to practice using your words, images and stories in a way that helps employees perceive the future with clarity. The best leaders don't try to come up with newer and better speeches; rather, they practice and refine their favorite speeches, focusing on the material that is real and pertinent.

Leaders must never forget the universal need for security that is created through community, clarity, authority and respect. Clarity is the most likely element to engender confidence, persistence, resilience and creativity.

The ideas and concepts described in this article are attributed to Marcus Buckingham, author of *The One Thing You Need to Know...About Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success*. Buckingham is co-author of two best-selling books: *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently* (coauthored with Curt Coffman) and *Now, Discover Your Strengths* (coauthored with Donald O. Clifton).

David Sorin  
Management Mpowerment Associates

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**David Sorin: Management Mpowerment Associates**  
**658 Thomas Jefferson Rd.**  
**Wayne , PA 19087**  
**610.783.5305**  
**email David Sorin | Visit Management Mpowerment**  
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