

Dollars & Sense...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

LARRY JOHNSTON

Larry has spent over 40 years working on behalf of non-profit organizations. A well-known development and organization development consultant, coach, and mentor, he holds an M.A. degree in Organization Development and a Ph.D. in Human and Organizational Systems from the Fielding Graduate University.

Being passionate about “transformational development,” Larry’s doctoral research resulted in the creation of Donor Value Mapping® -- a research process to help organizations increase donor satisfaction, loyalty, and lifetime value.

Having consulted internationally with clients in Canada, Europe, and Latin America, he has a special interest in fundraising, strategic management, and organizational health and effectiveness. In addition to helping design and build sustainable, high-performance development programs, much of his work entails equipping leaders and managers to successfully manage organizational change. Larry and his wife Rebecca live in Colorado Springs, Colorado.



Plugging the Holes in Your Bucket

by Larry F. Johnston, Ph.D.

At conferences where I speak, I’ll often tell those in my seminars, “I don’t care what your mission is, you’re in the *energy* business.”

That’s simply my way of expressing a deep per-

sonal and professional conviction that the primary task of leadership and management is *to focus energy on productivity.*

Stop to think about it a moment. This energy --

what the military would have in mind when they speak of the “morale” of the troops – will never appear on any balance sheet or operating statement and yet it is arguably the most important asset your organization has. (An important presupposition is that you’ve hired the right people, because highly energized incompetents can be more than a little scary!)

In fact, Victor Vroom’s celebrated formula in motivational theory states that “ $A \times M = P$ ” – Ability *times* motivation equals performance. Multiply even great ability by minimal motivation and from a productivity perspective you’re toast (as in soggy milk toast). Multiply even modest ability by “incandescent eyeball” motivation and you’re likely to do some rockin’ and rollin’.

What has this got to do with buckets? Well, in their national bestseller, *How Full is Your Bucket?*, Tom Rath and Don Clifton note that “Each of us has an invisible bucket. It is constantly emptied or filled, depending on what others say or do to us. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it’s empty, we feel awful.”

Based on research, Rath and Clifton note that 99 out of 100 people report they want to be around more positive people, and 9 out of 10

report being more productive when they’re around positive people.

The book goes on to explain what we’ve all experienced, and may in fact even experience on a daily basis. And that is that each of us has an invisible dipper, and we can use that dipper in our daily interactions to fill people’s buckets or to empty them.

How many of us realize that organizational climate – how we feel about our working environment – can account for as much as 30% of performance? More pointedly, how many of us genuinely appreciate the awesome power we have in our daily interactions to help fill (or empty) the buckets of others in our families, in our churches, or on our organizational teams?

Please understand. My personal bent is simply too pragmatic to advocate some cheesy, happy-face, saccharin approach to making people feel good. That’s a lame idea, and people would see through it in a heartbeat.

But I’m also sober enough and just observant enough to know that a kind word, and a simple but heartfelt recognition of people’s value and their work can work wonders. And the good

news is that it doesn’t have to take more than a three-second “I really appreciate you!”

If you’re interested in improving organizational climate and performance, let me encourage you to mind your dipper.

More practically, as a discipline, let me encourage you put three matches in your left pocket each morning. Then, each time throughout the day that you genuinely share a word of appreciation or affirmation with someone, transfer one of those matches to your right pocket.

At the end of each day, if you’ve got three matches in your right pocket, you’ll have the satisfaction of knowing that you’re lighting fires that will help your organization to burn brightly.

As John Wesley reportedly said, “Set yourself on fire and people will come from miles around just to watch you burn.”

McConkey • Johnston has had the privilege of helping leading ministries to become bigger and better for nearly four decades. How might we help you?