

Let them feel the idea is theirs

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Do you often have trouble getting others to cooperate with you? Whether you’re trying to sell something, lead someone, or even if you’re trying to get someone else’s “buy-in” for further action, gaining support, cooperation, or action from others can be quite difficult.

Years ago I took over as the leader of a military armory after the previous leader was fired for inefficient operations and loss of weapons. When I arrived on my first day, I could sense the armorers were expecting a lot of hard language and an imminent dictatorship from that day forward. They were lacking enthusiasm and pride, and even seemed discouraged and disorganized. However, instead of lining everyone up and telling them it was “my way or the highway,” I took a different approach.

I called a meeting first thing and asked everyone what they expected from me as a leader. They told me things like loyalty, respect, competence, empathy, career guidance, and to basically “have their backs” when the going got tough. I then asked them to tell me what I should expect from them in return. They

seemed surprised I’d ask them that but they quickly responded with: loyalty, honesty, initiative, and that they should give a hundred percent to the mission at all times. Next, I unbolted and opened the entrance door and told them I was affording them a no-retribution opportunity to leave the armory and transition to a different role/job in the squadron. To my surprise, no one took the offer--everyone remained in the armory.

From that day forward life and operations in the armory improved drastically. See, the armorers made a moral bargain with me. As long as I lived up to my end, they lived up to theirs. Consulting them about their wishes and desires was just the shot in the arm they needed. They believed the moral bargain was their idea and therefore were more inspired, enthused, and hard-working on a daily basis.

I recently read about a salesman who sold sketches to stylists and manufacturers. He did okay but still had many great prospects who weren’t buying from him no matter how hard he tried to urge them to buy what he thought they ought to have.

After several failures with one particular buyer, he decided to change his approach. He began taking a series of unfinished sketches to the buyer’s office and asked him how they could finish them up in such a way that he could use them. After a few days the salesman got suggestions then took the sketches back to the studio and had them finished according to the buyer’s ideas. The result? The buyer purchased every one of them. From then on, the buyer bought many sketches because he was made to feel that he was creating the designs.

Letting the other person feel the idea is his or hers not only works in leadership and business, it also works in politics, family life, and occasions requiring cooperation from others. Sure there may be urgent or emergency situations that call for directions and orders to be barked out and obeyed, but in most instances, taking the time to get buy-in from others goes a long way in developing initiative, motivation, and cooperation. Let them feel the idea is theirs and they will pay the price, get on board, or follow you to the end.

~ The End ~