

LMI Journal



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Enable Others to Take Positive Action

No matter how ambitious, talented, or self-disciplined you are, at some point it becomes necessary to involve other people in achieving results and building effective productivity. Empowerment is the means for accomplishing these goals. Empowerment is the creation of a motivational climate that releases power, resources, and responsibility to each team member to foster maximum involvement, commitment, and desired results. Empowerment extends productivity beyond the organizational skill and knowledge of one person; it is the art of enabling others to take action.

Empowerment is an essential building block in win-win, interdependent human relationships, regardless of your position and responsibilities. Allow others to make more decisions, and they bring more commitment to any corporate endeavor. Impart a degree of ownership to others, and they become involved in your vision and action plan. This is true in sales, education, customer service, management, manufacturing, and any other field. Empowerment allows anyone striving for personal and professional productivity to move forward.

Because it is the essence of true leadership and influence, empowerment achieves results and progress through the commitment and involvement of others. In the past, only leaders were allowed to control information flow and deci-

sion making, taking full credit for results. Today, however, it is widely recognized that all team members can make valuable contributions and share in both credit and responsibility for outcomes. Empower those who are in the best position to take action by giving them the direction, knowledge, and authority they need. Handled correctly, empowerment multiplies your efforts as well as your vision and goals.

Communicate to your team members your respect through delegating some of your traditional authority and power to them.

Empowerment takes many shapes and forms: self-directed work teams, asking for ideas, turning over leadership of meetings, delegation of training responsibilities, flex-time policies, surveys, cross training, and other methods encouraging participation. These strategies are tools for empowerment.

Recognize the expertise of all team members and

unleash their creativity. In today's diverse, internationalized, information culture, top-down autocratic control is obsolete; mutual respect, reasonable delegation of authority, and mutual commitment to organizational goals are the hallmarks of an effective organization.

Give employees the responsibility to adapt, respond, and take advantage of opportunities. Experimentation and inno-



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– continued from page 1 –

vation must occur regularly to keep up with a world characterized by information and technology change. Consumers increasingly demand instantaneous service, faultless quality, and low prices. To address these demands, train team members in more than procedures; help them to understand the spirit and missions of their work. Even temporary workers need information and training to function as empowered, dynamic team members.

Tapping into the existing values and vision of team members is the key to nurturing accountability and commitment of the team. The story is told of a traveler who visited a stone quarry and asked three of the workers what they were doing.

“Can’t you see?” said the first one irritably. “I’m cutting a stone.”

The second replied, “I’m earning a living.”

But the third put down his pick and thrust out his chest proudly. “I’m building a cathedral,” he said.

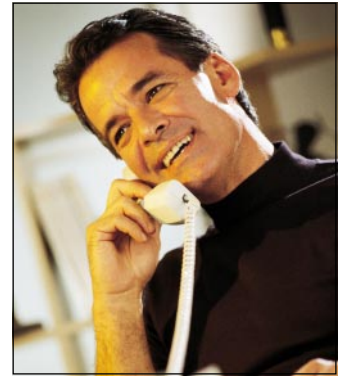
How people view their work makes a significant impact on long-term productivity. All workers perform and respond to change best when they are accomplishing goals that matter to them. A synergistic, empowered, and productive team consists of individuals who envision their input as meaningful and significant.

The Benefits of Empowerment

High quality service is one of the significant results of an empowered team. Because empowered team members are well-informed, well-trained, and vested with the necessary authority, they are able to seek ways to satisfy customers without being forced to wade through mountains of bureaucracy and red tape. Empowerment can be the spark of progress, with many tangible and intangible benefits, including:

- Retention of creative, skilled people as they participate and share in the success of the group,
- Logical, reasonable policy and decision making based on information from diverse sources in the organization,
- High-caliber information flow as people know their ideas are solicited, respected, and acted upon,
- Decreased waste and inefficiency as people closest to situations take initiative,
- Ideas captured in time to respond to market needs,
- Unique competitive advantages derived from maximizing the talents of all individuals in the organization,
- Increased high payoff time for upper management, and
- Improved morale as group members enjoy belonging and becoming emotionally and intellectually involved in projects.

Initiating the process of achievement through empowerment can take longer than imposing an agenda upon others. But strict, top-down control fails to fully use the potential of individuals. As a result, team members show only short-lived effectiveness, along with little or no responsiveness or adaptability to outside events. In contrast, once people experience the fulfillment that comes through empowerment and involvement, they are eager to adapt and make full use of their potential. They recognize the many personal benefits they reap as the organization succeeds and their responsibility and effectiveness expand through empowerment.



Empowered Delegation

Effective delegation attitudes can be taught and learned. Because of people’s diverse backgrounds, these attitudes come more naturally and are more easily understood by some people than by others. When desire is present, however, any attitude or personality trait can eventually be developed. Continually observe leaders around you, glean ideas from books and articles, make a conscious decision to infuse your thought processes with positive ideas and belief in others, and encourage appropriate team behavior. Here are several actions you can use regularly to set the stage for an empowered delegation environment:

- Think and talk in terms of “we,” not just “me.”
- Recognize that mistakes are part of the learning process.
- Replace the word “failure” with other words in your vocabulary: mistake, learning experience, or test.
- Know your personal strengths and limits.
- Set healthy boundaries for your personal time and involvement based on your personal goals.
- Rotate leadership responsibility for meetings and projects when appropriate.
- Include all contributors’ names on reports, memos, and other communication.
- Constantly communicate and repeat your reason for working together.
- Be available for others; at the same time, encourage resourcefulness and creativity. Effective delegation gives the message: “Do whatever it takes; you have the talent!”

Believing in Your Team Players

Effective delegation always involves adequate communication. People accept responsibility and act when they know what you expect. Talk informally with a person before actually turning over responsibility. A nonthreatening approach allows the person to express fears or enthusiasm about the idea of accepting delegated responsibility. You also receive their insight and ideas about how to address the project most efficiently.

Gradually turn over the responsibility. As a worker develops confidence and efficiency, move further aside by setting specific checkpoints for the employee to report on results. Provide assurance that you are available for questions whenever needed. Gradually move to more informal supervision. Moving up to a higher level of delegation provides more time for you and empowers the team member to increase their productivity.

Table of Contents

Page 1-2:	<i>Enable Others to Take Positive Action</i>
Page 3: Growth	<i>Adopt a Leadership Philosophy</i>
Page 4: Organizational Leadership	<i>Surrender Power and Invest in Others</i>
Page 5: Supervisory Management	<i>Knowing Who You Are as a Leader</i>
Page 6: Personal Leadership	<i>Succeed Above and Beyond Your Best</i>
Page 7: Staff Development	<i>Pinpoint the Nature of People Issues</i>
Page 8: Strategic Development	<i>Bridging the Gap Between Potential and Performance</i>

Adopt a Leadership Philosophy

Leadership ability and effectiveness are enhanced tremendously by a leadership philosophy that calls for belief in the worth of people, belief in their abilities, and belief in their potential for growth. This leadership philosophy forms a bedrock foundation for building sound relationships with team members – relationships that lead to personal growth and success for them, for their manager, and for the entire organization. Effective leaders possess this philosophy. They light the spark of imagination and creativity in themselves and in their followers. Effective leaders seek to unleash their own untapped potential as well as that of their people.

Any leadership position carries with it certain status, privileges, opportunities, and power. These benefits are a part of your compensation. You have the right to enjoy them; you have earned them. But privileges carry with them their own responsibilities. Recognize that the unique position that brings you honor and prestige also requires making decisions, solving problems, and performing services that no one else in the organization can perform.

An effective leadership philosophy also encompasses a sense of ethical responsibility. The ethics of an organization is concerned with the way people behave and with the values or standards that govern their actions and choices. Leaders are responsible for choosing the goals of the organization, establishing its direction, and determining its ethical standards. Ethical standards grow out of the basic beliefs and personal values of the top leaders. Certain standards in the areas of fairness, honesty, and personal responsibility, however, are widely accepted by the whole of society. Effective leaders maintain these basic ethical responsibilities:

- ▲ *They obey the law.* Operating within both the letter and the spirit of the law is a responsibility of leadership. Most laws are designed to protect particular portions of the population: employees, workers, consumers, or the general public. Organizational rules and procedures should make it clear to all employees that the law must be obeyed. Policies and procedures should also make it possible for employees to do their work well while satisfying legal requirements.
- ▲ *They deal honestly with clients or customers.* Ethical behavior toward clients is more than a matter of right and wrong; it is good business as well, for satisfied customers come back again and again. Honest dealing includes providing a high quality product or service for consumers. They have the right to expect that the product or service you market will accomplish what you claim and that it can be used with safety and confidence. Your clients should also be able to trust you to keep your commitments in regard to quality, delivery time, price, and credit terms.
- ▲ *They treat team members fairly.* Effective leaders seek to achieve the greatest possible results through directing the efforts of people. But if they exploit people in the process of achieving results, they stand to lose good workers and, in the long run, lose the ability to produce results. Since the results achieved by the organization come from the efforts of all those who have a part in the work, it is the responsibility of the leader to see that everyone benefits from what is earned in the process.



Surrender Power and Invest in Others

Understanding the nature of authentic, effective authority and power is inherent in empowering a team and practicing effective delegation. True power involves leading through character, example, and intellectual challenge. Personal power is strengthened and multiplies through surrendering it and investing it in others.

The most successful, powerful leaders respect their people and their potential and liberate them to do what they do best, in their own way. This approach is difficult for those who have been conditioned to believe that effective action is accomplished by a group of people acting in a clone-like manner — behaving just as the leader would — rather than as individuals. Leaders who excessively control people destroy opportunities, along with one of the most important assets of team members: self-confidence.

Use the following ideas to develop appropriate attitudes for delegation effectiveness:

▲ *Flexibility.* Delegation must be accompanied by flexibility. Allow people to test new ideas, and you will enjoy the rewards of unexpected, innovative results. When you adopt a flexible, adaptive attitude, delegation motivates and encourages others to take responsibility for thinking creatively about how and why they follow certain procedures. A flexible work environment enables workers to eliminate unnecessary steps — one of the most effective strategies for increasing productivity — and spend time only on activities that add value for the customer.

▲ *Self-confidence.* Self-confidence gives you the freedom to share necessary information and resources to empower others through delegation. Self-confidence frees you to expect your team members to perform as well or better than you. One common reason leaders withhold authority and responsibility from other team members is the fear of being replaced or unneeded. This attitude sacrifices progress of the whole group. A manager who has a deep need for personal power and the dependence of others often expects or demands unquestioning obedience — an expectation fatal to effective teamwork and maximum productivity. When you refuse to control others, you become an indispensable profit and productivity center. To free your time for the highest productiv-

ity, look for appropriate opportunities to delegate. Find contributions you can make that no one else has the ability to perform. Delegate the rest. A person consumed with the passion for finding new, creative, measurable ways to contribute to the organization will always be a vital, valuable team member.

▲ *Focus on results.* Develop consistent thought habits of believing that others are competent, intelligent, and capable of achievement. Believe that “different” is not necessarily undesirable. People to whom you delegate tasks are unlikely to use the methods you would, but their work is not necessarily inferior. Judge results rather than methods when you delegate. Some people are conditioned to believe that their work and that of their people is valuable only if it is “perfect.” Perfectionistic people inevitably short-circuit teamwork by operating from fear that the outcome of surrendering control reflects badly on the group or themselves. With these often unreasonable expectations, they hinder their own performance and quench much of the creativity and enthusiasm of other team members.



Set appropriate standards of excellence for yourself and your team members. Pursue excellence rather than perfection.

▲ *Team commitment.* True heroes are team members who earn respect, involvement, and results through behind-the-scenes, consistent dedication to group goals. Taking credit for the work of others, not listening to their ideas, working solo — these are all symptoms of a mistaken belief that effective leaders must always be unquestionably in control to command and inspire results from others. Release control of the activities you delegate to others. Constantly eliminate activities that minimize, undermine, or second-guess the work of other team members. To teach others how to make good decisions, involve team members in the process of making decisions. Permit others to make as many decisions for themselves as possible. Commit yourself to team empowerment and allow others to succeed and excel.

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Knowing Who You Are as a Leader

Success as a manager depends upon accepting your responsibility as a leader. To function effectively as a leader, you must make some choices about your role within the organization, your priorities as a manager, and the values by which you live. You must know who you are, both personally and as part of the whole organization. Without such self-knowledge, it is difficult to make good decisions and take action on them. Successful management grows out of a consistent and constructive attitude toward other people and how they should be treated.

These basic success attitudes and habits form a solid foundation for building an even more productive, satisfying career. You earned your position because you demonstrated to some degree some of the following abilities and others:

- ◆ You have what it takes to be a team player. You have demonstrated the ability to listen, to accept responsibility, and to cooperate and communicate with others to accomplish the goals of the work group. Your attitude displays a genuine respect for others and the recognition of the importance of following as well as leading. You can follow instructions; this ability is a starting point for learning how to instruct and guide others.
- ◆ You are organized and can help others organize their activities. You have demonstrated a high degree of job knowledge, competence, and practical judgment, or “common sense.” You are able to set priorities and to discipline yourself to put first things first. You have demonstrated your ability to encourage others to participate constructively in getting the work done.
- ◆ You succeed even if needed instructions or materials are not readily available. You figure out how to get the work done even when the procedure is not obvious or clear. You solve problems even when unexpected obstacles arise. You are resourceful and creative. You are flexible and can make changes when the situation requires them.
- ◆ You are motivated. You are enthusiastic about your work. You are optimistic, and you exercise initiative. You like

what you do and enjoy the challenge of responsibility. Getting the work done well and on time is important to you and provides a great deal of satisfaction.

- ◆ You achieve results. You focus your energy on the goals and priorities that produce the highest payoff for your organization. You know that the best measurement of your effectiveness is the results you obtain. Your commitment to achieving tangible results creates persistence. You set a positive example of consistently pursuing the results necessary for your organization to survive, grow, and succeed.
- ◆ You are a leader. In every assignment you are given, you set a positive tone and pace for the work climate. By your example, you instill in others the desire to do their

best. You fill a position of leadership by empowering others to assume responsibility on the work team. How far you advance in your career is limited only by your commitment and enthusiasm, your desire to learn and improve, and your willingness to make the adjustments and changes that will accelerate your career development. Psychologists say that few people ever use more than 15-25 percent of their potential. All that is required to increase your effectiveness and to fulfill your highest dreams is to use just a little more of the potential you already have. The biggest room in any organization is the “room for improvement.” Add a little refinement of techniques, a few new ideas, and some

selected strategies for using new skills and ideas in your job, and you take a big step up the ladder of success.



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As an effective and successful leader, you must develop and strengthen the attitudes, skills, and habits that will earn you the respect you need to exercise your authority more effectively. Earning the respect of your associates and learning to use your power more productively will increase the results you are able to get by working with and through people.

Succeed Above and Beyond Your Best

Increasing productivity means surpassing your previous best. It happens only when you adopt new goals that build upon past performances. Adopt and nurture the “Let’s beat our best” attitude with team members on a one-on-one basis. Earn behind-the-scenes agreement and commitment from key group members before presenting new, challenging goals to the entire team. Lay a positive foundation by making effective and SMART goals to accomplish achievement.

S stands for SPECIFIC. A goal is specific when it is clearly defined. A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal, ask yourself:

- **WHO:** Who is involved?
- **WHAT:** What do I want to accomplish?
- **WHERE:** Identify a location.
- **WHEN:** Establish a time frame.
- **WHICH:** Identify requirements and constraints.
- **WHY:** Specify reasons, purpose, or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

M stands for MEASURABLE.

A goal is measurable when it can be quantified. Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as...

How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

A stands for ATTAINABLE. A goal is attainable when it is humanly possible to accomplish. When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

You can attain most any goal you set — when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed

far and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable — not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals, you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

R stands for REALISTIC. A goal is realistic when it represents an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seemed easy simply because they were a labor of love.

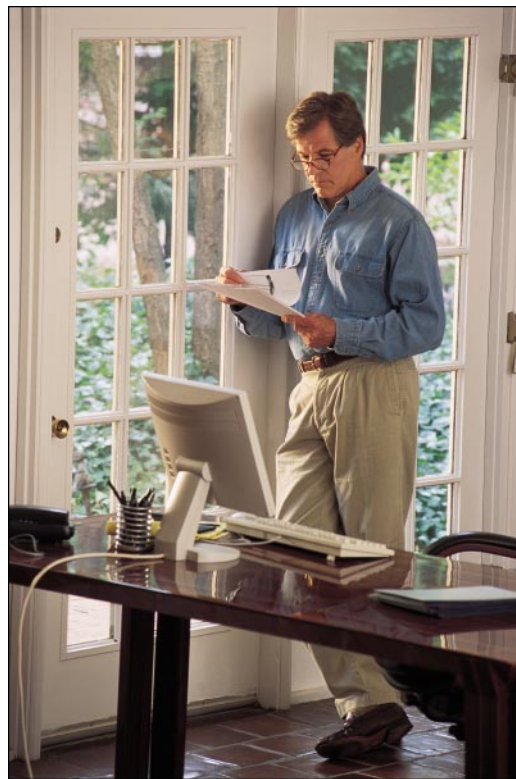
A goal is realistic when you truly believe that it can be accomplished with the time and resources available to you. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past. Another way to help you determine if a goal is realistic is to ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

T stands for TANGIBLE. A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses — that is, taste, touch, smell, sight, or hearing. When your goal is tangible, or when you tie an intangible goal to a tangible, you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.

Intangible goals are your goals for the internal changes required to reach more tangible goals. They are the personality characteristics and the behavior patterns you must develop to pave the way to success in your career or for reaching some other long-term goal. Since intangible goals are vital for improving your effectiveness, give close attention to tangible ways of measuring

them. Pose this question to yourself, “What evidence of accomplishment will there be when I reach this goal?”

As you seek continuous professional and personal improvement, it is vital for you to set specific productivity goals. *To reach any destination you need to know where you are going so you can plan the best way to get there.*



Pinpoint the Nature of People Issues

Changes and adjustments are necessary whenever people work together. Equipment problems pale in significance compared to problems caused by people. A person cannot be discarded unemotionally just as a broken piece of equipment would. People problems are often difficult to solve. On the other hand, solving people problems offers immense personal satisfaction and professional benefits.

A simple procedure helps to analyze and pinpoint the nature of a problem affecting one or more team members:

◆ *Examine the environment.* Are physical conditions in the work environment adequate?

Check lighting, equipment, temperature, availability of tools and supplies, and all other comfort and convenience factors that apply. If any physical element of the work environment is adversely affecting productivity, correct it so people can concentrate fully on their professional function. The emotional environment is also primarily a leadership responsibility. To create a positive environment, keep lines of communication open. Provide clear job descriptions and delegate authority to carry out assignments appropriately. Make sure you give adequate feedback and recognition. If the environment is adequate, consider the next step.

◆ *Evaluate team member skills.* Is the individual capable of doing the job? If necessary skills are absent, consider whether or not additional training would correct the problem. If so, provide opportunity for the team member to receive that training. If training would not help, then this person and the job are incompatible and a new job assignment is necessary. If the environment and the team member's skills are adequate, consider the two remaining steps.

◆ *Check activity.* Make two types of checks on activity: the type of activity and the level of activity. Check whether activities are the right ones for the purpose of the job. Then determine whether the person is actually working hard enough and long enough. Productivity will be low when either of these indicators is out of line. If there is an activity problem, you know that it is related to either skills or motivation.

◆ *Examine motivation.* If the environment is adequate, if

the team member is capable of performing the work, and if the individual is working at the right task but not being very productive, the problem is probably one of motivation. Look at the attitudes of the team member, the enthusiasm, and the level of commitment to the goals of the organization. Many problems are problems of motivation. When a person is motivated, the other problems are usually easily resolved. If a person is not motivated, no amount of skills or activity will permanently resolve the problem. Seek out the needs of the team member that

can be used as a basis for motivating that person to become more productive. If you conclude that the problem lies in the area of motivation, do whatever is necessary to lead the team member to adopt new attitudes. Never automatically assume that more money is the solution to all motivation problems. Actually a team member whose productivity is unsatisfactory is already overpaid. More money may depress productivity even more because it delivers the illogical message

that present inadequate performance deserves a reward.

Finding a solution to a motivation problem begins with establishing a positive personal relationship as a basis for discovering the needs that are presently important to the employee. This may take time. Team members who know you are dissatisfied with their performance find it difficult to confide in you about any personal needs or problems. Remember that low productivity is only a symptom; you must find the underlying problem. Consider these possible causes of people problems:

- Boredom with the work and the need for some change
- Frustration with work that is not challenging enough
- Physical or emotional problems that need professional attention
- Stress from family problems
- Discouragement because of overwhelming workload
- Inability to connect work on the job to achievement of personal life goals
- Perceived lack of opportunity for advancement or recognition in current position

Once you discover the underlying cause of the problem, you can develop and carry out a plan to solve it.



Bridging the Gap Between Potential and Performance

Since 1966, Leadership Management International™ has been bridging the gap between potential and performance by helping organizations and individuals evaluate their strengths and opportunities through implementation of the unique and proven LMI Process™.

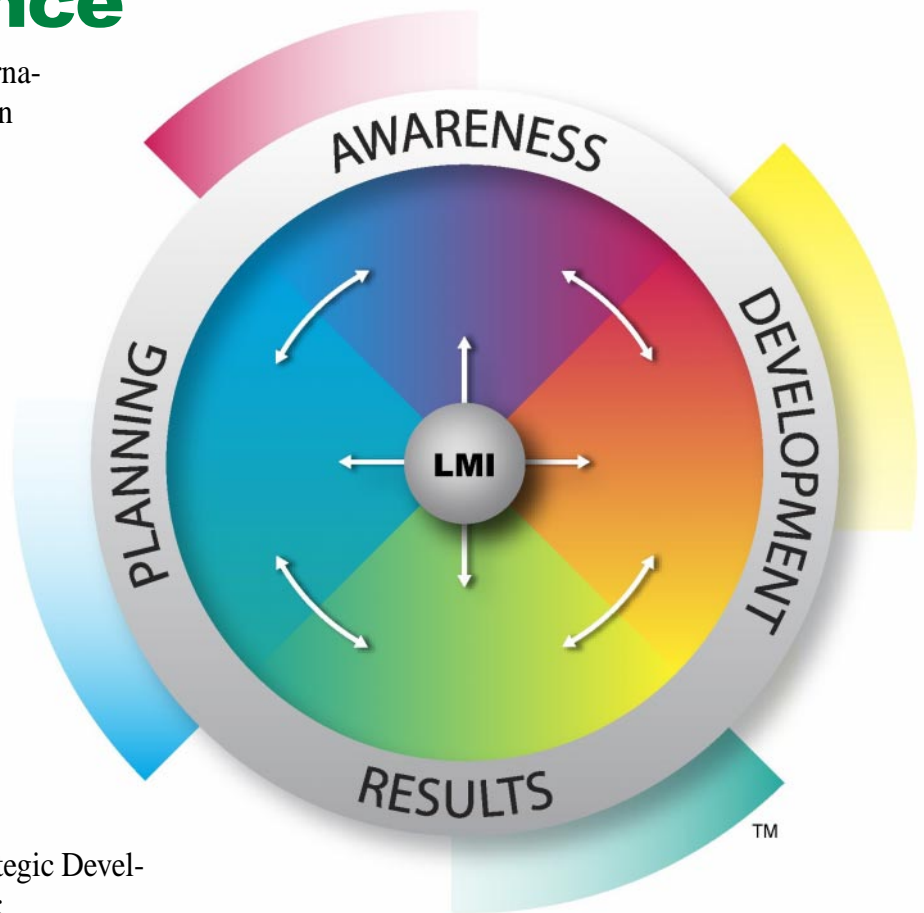
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- Develops leaders who, in turn, empower their people to use their untapped talents and abilities.
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