



# The Real World

## Managing Passion

**I was thinking about the methods that are currently in vogue as organizations attempt to execute the business of the day.** Specifically, I was thinking about the role of passion as a management tool. When missing, the environment feels flat to those working in it—the corporate version of Austin Powers’ “Have you lost your mojo, baby?”

I am hesitant to refer to passion as a management tool because I don’t want to advocate manipulation in its most negative form. Instead, I want you to approach this as a form of booster rocket that you can adapt and use to get to where you want to go faster.

Almost every exec will admit that the more people in the organization who understand the strategic plan and the objectives, goals, and tactics that support it, the easier it is to execute.

Almost every exec will admit that when people in the organization are really engaged (because they understand their role and willingly accept their responsibilities), it’s infinitely easier to lead them and successfully execute annual business plans.

If that is the case, why do so many leaders shy away from proactively tapping into the endless stream of human potential that is unleashed when fervor exists and is cultivated?

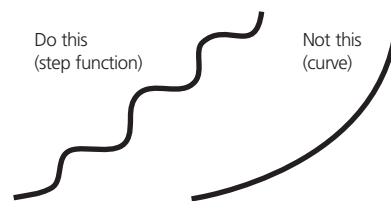
If fervor speeds up execution, why leave it to random? Why not manage it?

The term managerial talent has been defined as “the behavior exhibited by a manager that increases the amount of productive, constructive, and profitable behavior on the part of

others in the organization on a daily basis.” In all my years of consulting, no one has ever had a problem with this definition. But that doesn’t make it any easier to live that standard, does it?

Changing behaviors and improving results on a daily basis is tough to do even when we have no choice. In fact, one could argue that if the people being led don’t subscribe to this philosophy, there will be a great deal of pent-up frustration about why the goal-posts seem to be moving every day.

As an executive, part of your role is to ensure that your managers know that they must operate so their teams make a gain and then hold the gain. It may help to envision a step function versus a continually rising curve.



The hold part is more critical than most realize. It is more than simply not backsliding—that’s only part of the equation. Without the hold part, people won’t ever get to enjoy a feeling of victory because whatever they just accomplished a moment ago isn’t good enough now. Not a very motivating environment.

Before the age of the knowledge worker, people were usually treated as extensions of a piece of machinery. As long as they were fulfilling their functional responsibility, they could check their brains at the door. Many times during my career, I have heard one

person say to another, “I need three bodies to work in this area.” Not a very enlightened view of people is it? What is the likelihood that high levels of managerial talent are running rampant in an environment like that?

How many people in your firm are going about accomplishing their tasks but not really helping you achieve organizational success as much as they could be? Is it because they aren’t passionate about their role? Is it the way they are being led? Is it because they don’t know the end game? All of the above?

Upon his retirement from HP, David Packard said to his employees, “You shouldn’t gloat about anything you’ve done; you ought to keep going and try to find something *better* to do.” (Emphasis added.)

In addition to the obvious message from David recommending that HP people not rest on their laurels, it seems there is a more important takeaway. You can help ensure that there is greatness to be had in the future of your organizations by encouraging people to tap into their passions and following them through.

Help your people align their passions and interests with what is needed by the business—the “better,” if you will—and then enjoy the ride together.

*Doug Brown is CEO and chairman of Paradigm Associates, LLC, based in Cranford, NJ. This national firm specializes in strategic and executive leadership development processes that create Breakthrough Thinking For Your Real World. Visit [www.ParadigmAssociates.US](http://www.ParadigmAssociates.US) or call (908) 276-4547 for more information.*