Encouraging the Heart
James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner

The Big Idea
The heart of a leader must be a caring one. Without this heart, his leadership will be without purpose. This is the premise of James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner’s new book, Encouraging the Heart, A Leader’s Guide to Rewarding and Recognizing Others.

Believing that a leader’s heart is the one that bridges the connection between him and his constituents, the authors invite leaders in all areas of business to live by and practice the principles of encouraging the heart which they unselfishly share in this new book. They argue that a leadership filled with values that encourage the heart speaks directly to people - to deeply held values and beliefs, to something beyond the material - and contributes to creating meaning in the workplace. Through this book, the authors aim to enrich the discussion of soul and spirit in the workplace.

Everything starts within you as a leader. Take the journey towards an organization that nurtures an encouraging heart among its members and create a workplace that gives new meaning and purpose to everyone involved.

Part One

Chapter 1: The Heart of Leadership

Encouragement for Best Performance

Knowing from their previous research that performance is higher when people have leaders who offer encouragement, the authors, in their leadership classes pose this question: Do I need encouragement to perform at my best? They expect that almost everyone would answer yes. In most of their classes, however, only about 60 percent reported that they needed encouragement to perform at their best.

Puzzled, the authors, probed deeper into the subject. Most people said they didn’t need encouragement. The majority believed themselves to be individuals who are responsible and take initiative in the workplace. Most of them perceived that needing encouragement implied they couldn’t perform well without someone cheering them on.

The authors then reframed the question: When you get encouragement, does it help you perform at a higher level? 98 percent responded positively. The response echoes the study by Kepner-Tregoe where the researchers found that 96 percent of North American workers agreed with the statement “I get a lot of satisfaction out of knowing I’ve done a good job.”

Starved for Recognition

A study revealed that only 50 percent of managers say they give recognition for high-performance and only about 40 percent of North American workers say they receive any recognition for a job well done. This can be attributed to the fact that most managers assume that getting extraordinary things done is just part of the job.
Paul Moran is a manager who at one point in his career failed to celebrate his team’s accomplishment because he never placed any importance on the positive benefits of recognition. He then changed his leadership style and found that recognizing others and celebrating successes has a tremendous impact on team performance. After developing and putting to practice a list of ways on how to recognize others, he saw productivity increase, absenteeism decrease, and immense improvement in employee interaction.

Opening Yourself Up

Most managers fail to recognize the efforts of others because expressing genuine appreciation means showing emotions. For most people, expressing emotions means being vulnerable. This is what happened to Joan Nicolo, a general manager at a financial services company. She was afraid of praising her staff’s good work because she didn’t want to be perceived as playing favorites. However, she realized that her staff did really deserve to be recognized. During a presentation, she publicly thanked people for fostering collaborative spirit on the project. She later realized that what she had done established a human connection with her colleagues that had not been there before. After that, communication was more open among her staff and she felt less guarded and people responded with a new level of enthusiasm for her leadership.

A Secret Revealed

We all want to be loved and we have high needs for it. The same can be said of the workplace relationship between leaders and those who follow them. Chief executive officer and venture capitalist Irwin Federman said that love is a necessary ingredient, one that is rarely appreciated, in part because we underrate the role of our feelings.

On love for leaders, Federman said: “You don’t love someone because of who they are; you love them because of the way they make you feel.” Love and affection has a place in business and the more positive leaders make us feel, the harder we will work for them more effectively.

If you work for a leader who encourages your heart, you will feel better about yourself and your self-esteem will go up thereby increasing your potential to perform at your maximum best.

Just Say Thank You

It is important to appreciate someone who has done a good job. In a survey of employee turnover, the chief reason people give for leaving is that they get “limited praise and recognition.” And they place on top of their list “the ability to recognize and acknowledge the contribution of others” as the skill that their managers should develop in order to be more effective.

Encouraging the heart can start with a simple thank you. To deny each other this gift of positive feedback is to deny increased opportunities for continued success.

Chapter 2: The Seven Essentials of Encouraging

Set Clear Standards

To successfully encourage the heart, it is important that everyone cherish a common set of standards. Setting clear standards pave the way to achieve common goals which in turn can be the basis of determining who should be given recognition in terms of performance. The standards must be standards of excellence, be aspirational, and must bring out the best in the team. Outstanding performance must be linked to a reward and must be measured against clearly defined standards.
Expect the Best

The best leaders believe that people can achieve the high standards that have been set. This is called the Pygmalion effect. It is a belief so strong that even if others don’t believe in it initially, the leader’s belief, gives rise to self-confidence and it becomes a “self-fulfilling prophecy.” As a leader, you should believe in other people’s potential in order to encourage the heart.

Pay Attention

Managing by walking around is one way for a leader to know what is happening on the floor. The term can also be revised as caring by walking around. A leader walks around not to catch people but to pay attention to what they are doing and to understand the significance of their actions. As a leader, you must always be on the lookout for excellent performance among your staff.

Personal Recognition

The best leaders get to know their people personally. They learn about their likes, dislikes, needs and interests. They observe them in their own settings then when it comes to recognize a particular person, they know a way to make it special, meaningful, and memorable.

Tell the Story

When you give recognition to other people, you must tell the story on how the person was able to perform exemplarily. Stories move us, they touch us, teach us, and cause us to remember. Besides putting things in context, stories enable the listeners to see themselves in it. People can relate more to stories that set good examples.

Celebrate Together

Public recognition is a form of celebration together. When you recognize someone in public, it encourages other people to emulate the awardee’s exemplary performance. This is how groups learn lessons. The public ceremony provides a setting for broadcasting the message to a much wider audience.

Set the Example

Every leader in the organization has to take the initiative to recognize individual contributions, celebrate team accomplishments, and create an atmosphere of confidence and support. Leaders set the example for others. You must practice what they preach. If you want others to encourage the heart, you must start by modeling it yourself.

Chapter 3: The Encouragement Index

Leadership can be learned and this is supported by research. Leadership scholars have consistently noted the high correlation between leadership skills and the capacity for self-improvement. If you know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, your purpose and how to achieve it, you possess the right tools on becoming a leader because leadership development starts with self-development.

Encouragement Index

The Encouragement Index (EI) is a self-evaluation process which lists twenty-one statements about what leaders do to encourage the heart. Using a ten-point scale, you should then indicate how often you typically engage in each behavior. You should evaluate yourself based on your present behavior and not based on what you think you should be doing.
The scale ranges from almost never, rarely, seldom, once in a while to often, usually, very often, and almost always.

Here are some of the questions that you need to evaluate yourself on:

___ I make certain we set a standard that motivates us to do better in the future than we are doing now.

___ I express high expectations about what people are capable of accomplishing.

___ I pay more attention to the positive things people do than to the negative.

___ I personally acknowledge people for their contributions.

___ I tell stories about the special achievements of the members of the team.

___ I make sure that our group celebrates accomplishments together.

___ I get personally involved when we recognize the achievements of others.

___ I clearly communicate my personal values and professional standards to everyone on the team.

___ I let people know I have confidence in their abilities.

___ I personally congratulate people for a job well done.

Boosting Your Score

When you evaluate yourself, you will gain insights into how much or how little you’re encouraging the hearts of others. At the same rate, you will also get some ideas on how to improve on your leadership skills.

Chapter 4: The First Essential: Set Clear Standards

The first prerequisite for encouraging the heart is to set clear standards. Standard in this context also means goals, values or principles. Standards give a sense of measurability. When standards are communicated to the entire group, then everyone will work towards the set standard, putting in even extra effort to achieve it.

Learning from the Scouts

A lot of things about leadership can be learned from the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts. In these organizations, boys and girls pledge to uphold certain principles. Advancement and recognition are earned through deeds that reflect the principles they live by. As they achieve specific goals, they earn merit badges, and when they gain enough merits, they attain a defined rank. The badges they wear are symbols of living up to standards and discipline.

Commitment Flows from Personal Values

Values make a difference in how people behave inside organizations and how they feel about themselves, their colleagues, and their leaders. A leader’s credibility being a foundation of leadership requires that he must clarify personal values. When the authors took a deeper look at the question of shared values they found out that the clarity of personal values is the force that really makes the difference in an individual’s level of commitment to an organization.
Goals Concentrate Minds

While values set the stage for action, goals release the energy. This is the concept of “flow” according to University of Chicago professor Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi. He claims that in order to experience “flow” it helps to have clear goals - not because achieving the goal is important but because without a goal it is difficult to concentrate and avoid distractions. If you have a goal in mind you will be able to concentrate, keep your eye on the prize, and take purposeful actions towards achieving it.

Goals Plus Feedback Keep You Engaged

When you start to achieve your goals you will want to know if you are going in the right direction. In a study by Stanford University’s Albert Bandura, he found that people’s motivation to increase productivity on a task increases only when they have a challenging goal and receive feedback on their progress. Goals and feedback go together as such, goals without feedback and feedback without goals, have little effect on motivation.

As a leader you should provide a clear sense of direction and provide feedback along the way, this will encourage people to do their best and to strive to make things happen.

Encouragement is Feedback

Encouragement is a form of feedback and when leaders use it, they become closer to people, they show that they care about them, and it demonstrates that they are interested in others. Because it is more personal and positive, it accomplishes what other forms of feedback cannot. It builds and strengthens trust between leaders and constituents.

Encouraging the heart speaks directly to people - to deeply held values and beliefs, to something beyond the material - and contributes to creating meaning in the workplace.

Chapter 5: The Second Essential: Expect the Best

When you expect the best, you start to embody excellence. It becomes your “self-fulfilling prophecy.” “Self-fulfilling prophecy” is a phrase coined by Robert K. Merton, a professor of sociology at Columbia University. His theory states that when a person predicts that something will occur, the expectation changes how the person behaves. The changed behaviors then make the event more likely to happen.

Expectations Lead to High Performance

Successful leaders hold high expectations of themselves and others. Expectations set the level of performance and they provide the framework into which people fit their own realities. When leaders expect something from their constituents, it releases their highest potential.

Positive Images Create Positive Possibilities

Positive images reinforce positive outcomes. When you have a positive view of what the future or your endeavor holds for you, you are enhancing the possibility of it happening. It’s because positive futures for self and others are first constructed in our minds. Unless you can see yourself as being successful, it will be very difficult to produce the behavior that leads to success. Through the positive images you formulate in your mind, you will be able to tap into your strength and significantly improve your performance more than anyone.
Who Leads the Leaders?

Just as leaders have expectations on their constituents, the same holds true for the constituents. It has been shown that when constituents communicate high expectations of how good a person can be as a leader, the leader may adjust her self-concept and self-expectations to match what others think of her.

Self-Esteem is a Win for All

As a leader, before you can encourage the heart, you have to believe in others and in yourself. Even though thoughts and beliefs are intangible they have an enormous impact on people in organizations. Exemplary leaders know this and know how to purposefully hold in their minds high expectations for themselves and other people.

Chapter 6: The Third Essential: Pay Attention

Ditch the Shiny Badge

When managers walk the floor and observe performance, they should not view themselves as a “sheriff” dispensing frontier justice. Sadly though, this is the perception many people have of managers.

A manager’s behavior will influence his constituent’s behavior. Imagine what behaviors will follow if you as a manager see yourself as a frontier sheriff with a shiny tin badge. Inspecting, controlling, checking up on others, finding fault with what they do, and looking for trouble are the kinds of action likely to flow from that self-image.

Release the Positive

Instead of looking for faults, leaders should find the opportunity to reward special achievement. If you know that someone is looking for positive examples, you should make an effort to reveal them. This will help create a supportive environment along with supportive coaching. When people see that you are a caring leader, they will open up to you and relate to you differently. They will be inspired to show you something that you can honor and celebrate and they will offer the best of themselves.

Put Others First

The authors’ recent research revealed that there has been a shift in three managerial values compared to their 1980 research. They have noticed that cooperative values are increasingly emphasized, focus is shifting from self to others, and home and family interests are receiving greater attention. There is emphasis now on others in organization, rather than toward personal needs.

Listen With Your Eyes and Heart

Central to putting others first is the capacity to walk in their shoes. Learning to understand and see things from another’s perspective is absolutely crucial to building trusting relations and to career success. Listening with eyes and heart requires a deeper level of paying attention and it is the only kind of listening that truly creates a capacity to encourage the heart.
Hang Out

Gretchen Kaffer, a human resource administrator with Honeywell-Measurex, learned the value of listening and being physically present when her department went through a reorganization. She decided to make lunch a regularly scheduled part of her day and join her colleagues. According to her, it opened up some good conversations about work and non work-related issues and events. This also gave her coworkers opportunity to ask her questions, make suggestions, and fill her in on employee relations and interactions.

Be a Friend and Open Up

People are more willing to follow someone they like and trust. As a leader you need to take time to talk with your subordinates. Try talking openly to your team about your hopes and dreams, your family and friends, your interests and pursuits. Conversations create an open door for trust among people to grow.

If leaders what the higher levels of performance that come with trust and collaboration, then they must demonstrate their trust in others before asking for trust from others.

Chapter 7: The Fourth Essential: Personalize Recognition

Know What They Like

Michael Levick, director of consulting and education services for WBT Systems said that “a good manager doesn’t need to ask the employee what type of recognition she wants. A good manager knows the tastes and interests of her staff, because a good manager knows that showing an interest is the first and most important form of recognition. A good manager also learns from many small, casual acts of recognition what works for each staff member.”

Personalize Means Culturalize

In this day and age, when boundaries between countries are reduced by technology and interaction between people of different cultures is constantly happening, a leader must keep in mind that cultural values run deep. Personalizing is about knowing the other so well that you know what’s appropriate individually or culturally. A leader must be culturally-sensitive to people from other cultures.

Think About It

What it comes down to is thoughtfulness: how much effort you put into thinking about the other person and what makes the recognition special for that person. It means observing an individual and asking” “What would really make this special and unique for this person - make it a memorable, one-of-a-kind experience?

Chapter 8: The Fifth Essential: Tell the Story

The Story is the Reality

Storytelling is the oldest and the most basic form of communication. This is how cultures and traditions were preserved from various tribes around the world. Thus, we have ingrained in our genes the gift of storytelling passed on by our ancestors to us. This explains why storytelling is more prevalent and more powerful than facts and figures. People are more inclined to believe stories more than they believe numbers.
Stories Teach, Mobilize, and Motivate

Gary Klein, scientist and researcher, has been studying and writing about how people make decisions under conditions of extreme emergencies. He has taken a look at professionals in high-stakes, intense-time-pressure environments where a decision could mean life or death – people like firefighters, critical care nurses, paramedics, pilots, nuclear plant operators and battle planners.

One of his conclusions challenged the business model of decision making. He discovered that under emergency situations they don’t function using the classic model of decision making which involves opinions and making deliberate choices. Instead, they use a non-linear approach that involves intuition, mental stimulation, metaphors, analogies, stories, etc. He believes that storytelling is an essential skill for passing along the lessons that we learn from highly complex, challenging situations.

Great Leaders are Great Storytellers

Leadership researchers have stressed the effectiveness of storytelling as a leadership tool. Stories summarize a leader’s vocation and its articulation speaks not only to the mind but to the heart of things: it is both reason and emotion. Stories convey the progress of the organization and how the actions of people contribute to achieving the goal.

As a leader you should know that stories put a human face on success. Stories put the behavior in a real context and make standards come alive. They move and touch people. By telling a story in detail, leaders illustrate what everyone needs to do to live by the organizational standards.

How to tell a Great Story

The authors suggest some practical guidelines on how to tell a story in an act of publicly recognizing a subordinate’s outstanding performance:

1. Identify the actors. Make sure you clearly have in mind a person you are trying to recognize.
2. State the predicament. Present both the problem to be solved and the standard that is at stake.
3. Clarify the actor’s intentions. In your recognition story, relate what went through the person’s mind as he weighted his options.
4. Describe the actions. Relate in as much detail as you can what happened. Relate what the person did specifically.
5. Include the props. Like props in a play, objects are important to a story. Props give a story detail.
6. Tell how it ended. Don’t leave your audience hanging; tell them the punch line.
7. Paint - or reenact - the scene. Be sure to place all of it in context.
8. Include a surprise. Every great story includes some kind of surprise. Find a way to add an element of amazement.

Stories Can be told through Technology

Don’t forget that you can also tell a story through voice mail and e-mail. Don’t forget the websites, the company newsletters, and even the water coolers. Through technology you can listen, watch, learn, and enjoy stories that encourage the heart again and again.
Chapter 9: The Sixth Essential: Celebrate Together

A Culture of Celebration

Scholarly research offers further support for the contention that celebration influences performance. In one study, the investigators found that what distinguished high-performing groups from those performing less was the wide variety and frequency of celebratory events where recognition and appreciation were expressed.

Involving Others in Life

In every workplace, there are various things on display: awards, diplomas, paintings, posters, trophies or tributes. These things manifest celebration. They are reminders of accomplishments, positive memories and experiences. Through these displays emotions of joy, wonder, love, inspiration, importance and success are experienced again and shared with others. The photos, posters, plaques are all ways of inviting other people to join the experience.

Celebrations Build Community

Celebrations - whether to recognize the accomplishment of one person or to cheer the achievements of many - are opportunities to promote individual health, but also opportunities for leaders to build healthier groups.

According to Deal & Key, celebrations bond people together and connect them to shared values and myths. Ceremonies and rituals create a community of individuals with a strong corporate spirit.

Celebrations Reinforce Values

Celebrations offer opportunities to reinforce organizational values. Whether it is staged to honor an individual, team or group, celebrations communicate for all to see and hear the principles that are important enough that time and money should be spent to recognize them.

More than parties, celebrations create meaning. As a leader, when you are planning a celebration it is important to ask yourself this question: What meaning am I trying to create?

Public recognition offers leaders the chance to convey the message that if one person in the organization can do something outstanding, then the others can do it as well. By publicly recognizing an individual’s outstanding effort, a leader provides people an example that they can emulate.

Chapter 10: The Seventh Essential: Set the Example

Credibility is the Foundation

Because credibility is the foundation of leadership, people want leaders who are credible. A leaders’ credibility makes a huge difference in people’s performance and commitment to an organization.

The authors did a research on the attitudes and performance of people led by individuals who scored high on personal credibility and those led by individuals who scored low. Here are their findings:

When people perceive their immediate managers or their senior managers to have high credibility; they’re significantly more likely to:
Be proud to tell others they’re part of the organization
Feel a strong sense of team spirit
See their own personal values as consistent with those of the organization
Feel attached and committed to the organization
Have a sense of ownership for the organization

However, when people perceive their immediate managers to have low credibility, they’re significantly more likely to:

- Produce only if they’re watched carefully
- Be motivated primarily by money
- Say good things about the organization publicly but criticize it privately
- Consider looking for another job if the organization experiences problems
- Feel unsupported and unappreciated

Credibility Makes a Difference

The authors asked various people about their concept of credibility and how their leaders exhibit it behaviorally. Here are some of their responses:

- “Credible leaders practice what they preach.”
- “They walk the talk.”
- “Their actions are consistent with their words.”
- “They put their money where their mouth is.”
- “They keep their promises.”

The most frequent response: “They do what they say they will do.”

When it comes to deciding whether a leader is believable, people first listen to the words and then watch the actions.

Part Three

Chapter 11: Finding Your Voice

Beyond Tools and Techniques

Finding your voice is critical to becoming an authentic leader. To be able to find your unique voice, you should explore your self. What are the things that you are capable of doing? What things can you share with other people to enrich their lives? This ushers in a period of mixing and testing new ingredients; of invention; of going beyond technique; beyond training; beyond copying what the masters do, and beyond taking the advice of others.

It’s about Caring

The heart of effective leadership is genuine caring for people. How much do you really care about the people you lead? If your answer is a lot then you are on the right path. But you must confront yourself with this question daily. When you care deeply, the techniques described in this book will become genuine expressions of your caring.

Major Gen. John H. Stafford was asked by the authors on how to go about developing leaders and he said: “The secret to success is to stay in love. Staying in love gives you the fire to really ignite other people, to see inside other people, to have a greater desire to get things done than other people.”
You can become the best leader that you can be if you stay in love. When you’re in love with the people you lead, the products and services you offer, and the customers and clients you serve, you just pour your heart into it.

Chapter 12: Ways to Encourage the Heart

This chapter gives some ideas on how to get you started on the journey to encouraging other people’s heart. There is no limit to what you can do and your imagination is the key. Have fun and experiment with the various suggestions.

Take time to clarify the values or “operating principles” that are important for you and your team to live by. Write down your answer to this question: “What are the values that I believe should guide my daily decisions and actions, and those of the people with whom I work with and interact?” Post your values statement conspicuously where you know you’ll be reminded of your principles regularly.

Every time you start a new project, make sure that SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, time-bounded) are set.

Make sure people get regular, specific feedback.

If your company gives bonuses, start looking for ways to link some portion of the bonus to how people are meeting or exceeding cherished organizational values.

Participate in a retreat, the purpose of which is to explore the meaning and purpose in life and work. Remember the principle of the self-fulfilling prophecy: people tend to act consistently with your expectations of them.

Practice smiling. Smiling and laughing release naturally occurring chemicals in our bodies that fight off depression and uplift our moods.

The next time you talk to one of your constituents about a difficulty she’s having with a project, make sure that sometime during the conversation you say, “I know you can do it,” or words to that effect. And you better mean it.

Assign people to important tasks that aren’t part of their defined job. Let them know you have assigned them this unusual job because you have strong belief in them.

Buy a few inspirational posters and put them on the walls of your facility.

Read George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion. This is the classic novel on the power of positive expectations.

Learn to meditate. Practice it daily. Get in touch.

Walk in another’s shoes for a while. Volunteer to do someone else’s job.

Visit an organization that you know has a reputation for being a really fun place to work.

Attend local athletic events.

End each of your team meetings with a round of public praising.

Give every celebration a theme, and always include at some time during the evening.

Get people involved in planning celebrations.

Become more visible. You’re supposed to be setting the example.

Offer to teach a course on encouraging the heart.

Practice “living with encouraging the heart.” Make it a part of your life.