FAQs about the Five Practices Model from the Leadership Challenge

Practice #1: Model the Way

Are the top four characteristics of admired leaders consistent around the world, by age or time in the workplace, and so on?

We have done research in many different countries—in Africa, Asia, South America, Australia, Europe, and North America—and the top four characteristics of honest, forward-looking, competent, and inspiring are consistently found to be the same in almost all instances. There are exceptions, of course, but the probability is that these four will be in the top five or six, no matter where we conduct the survey.

There is one common variation that is easily explained. Those in lower-level positions in an organization often rate "forward-looking" as less essential than do more senior executives. Sometimes fewer than 50 percent of frontline employees select forward-looking as one of their seven characteristics of admired leaders, while nearly 90 percent of senior executives select it.

Why do organizations often spend more time working on or clarifying organizational values than helping people clarify their own personal values?

The most common reason is that organizational leaders are not aware of this research and the importance of clarity of personal values; in addition, some organizational leaders might believe that it is a person's individual responsibility to be clear on personal values and the organization should not be involved.

What if I share the organization's values, but I work for someone who either does not share or live by the organization's values?

If a participant asks this question, ask the group what it might feel like to work in an environment where the boss behaves inconsistently with the corporate values. (Example: Working for a boss at Nordstrom or L.L. Bean who tends to ignore or disrespect customers.) Likely responses will be "confusing, frustrating," and so on. Remind participants of how different those feelings are than the items listed in the research.

Say, "Now you see why shared values are so important to a leader and how much difference one person can make. In this case, you and your boss would not share common values—remember how you said that could make you feel (confused, frustrated, and so on—use participants' words). As a leader, you must confront this issue with your boss. When values are not aligned or shared, it makes it very difficult to perform at your best.

What happens if a person just doesn't feel moved by the organization's values?

Research is pretty clear that people feel more committed to and better about the organization when values are clear and shared. (See "Shared Values Make a Difference" on page 40 of the The Leadership Challenge Workshop, Third Edition Revised, Participant's Workbook.)

The key to your own satisfaction (and ultimate performance) is finding ways to fulfill your personal values within the organizational setting, whether the values are perfectly aligned or not. If there is too much conflict between your values and the organization's, however, you may need to find someplace else to work.

It's fine to live out our values in good times, when profits or business are up. But how do you maintain the focus on values in tough times, when financial results become the most important thing?

In a general sense it is always better to sacrifice profitability to retain credibility, as it takes a much lon-

ger time to regain credibility.

If you look at the business scandals that make the headlines, you'll find case after case of profits trumping ethical behavior. And what were the financial consequences of these actions? They were disastrous. They drained wealth from the pockets of the investors and employees.

A focus on profits at the expense of doing the right thing is a sure way to economic decline. Can you really imagine a business gaining in the long term by sacrificing employee and customer satisfaction for quarterly profits? Of course there are times when leaders have to make tough decisions about layoffs or cuts in the training budget. But remember that only the most credible leaders can make these kinds of tough decisions and sustain credibility.

You have to build your credibility over time so that when you make a tough decision, you can say, "You'll have to trust me on this one." You have to accumulate and invest capital before you can withdraw. That's what's called "having a good credit rating."

You say that "credibility is the foundation of leadership," but there seem to be a lot of people in very high level positions who aren't credible. How do you explain that?

People can continue to hold onto their titles for lots of reasons - power, money, and ownership, to name a few - but that doesn't make them credible. Authority and credible leadership aren't the same thing. Doing something willingly because you respect and trust someone is very different from doing something because they have authority to give you an order. Leadership isn't about position; it's about behavior. The most important behavior for leadership credibility is doing what you say you will do. In the end, that's what really makes the difference.

There are already so many demands on my time as a leader, how can I possibly be a role model for everything that we do?

The point is not about being a role model for everything that your organization does. We know that leaders can't be expected to have expertise in all areas or to have time to perform every task. If you did, you wouldn't need an organization. The point is that your organization should have a few values—five to seven at most—that should guide you and everyone else in their actions. Part of your job as a leader is to exemplify the behaviors that are consistent with these values and principles.

I don't understand how storytelling is a way to Model something. Can you explain?

Throughout human history, stories have been among the most powerful tools for passing on the ways and mores of a culture. Aesop's Fables, for example, all have a moral at the end. They're not just fun tales to read, they are really teaching lessons. The same with stories in your organization. When someone in your organization does something interesting or dramatic that truly exemplifies what you is expected of everyone, turn that incident into a story. Tell it as often as you can as a way of teaching others what to do. Research clearly shows that stories about real people doing real things are more believable than data or a company policy statement. Use this tried-and-true method to show how people in the organization can Model the Way.

You say that leaders must be clear about their personal values in order to earn and sustain credibility. I understand that leaders should be ethical people, but aren't they really judged by the results they get and the expertise they have?

Demonstrating your competence—and the ability to get things done as a result—is a key component, but expertise alone is not sufficient. Unless people trust you and believe that you have personal integrity, they won't follow you willingly over the long term. This is where values come into play. People want their leaders to stand for something. They want to know the few guiding principles that matter to you; the few things you care the most about. Anyone in a leadership position ultimately must hold themselves and others accountable to a set of standards. One of your tasks as a leader is to let others know what those values and standards are.

Aren't I imposing my values on others by saying, "This is what we stand for?" Doesn't that conflict from your contention that leaders must develop a set of shared values?

In a free society you really can't impose values top down. Even if you could you wouldn't want to, because the research clearly shows that when people freely choose to sign up they are much more committed. This is a both/and proposition. You can't be committed as a leader to something you don't believe in, and others can't be committed to something they don't believe in. The key is come to consensus as a team and organization about shared values, and the way we arrive at this is a free and open dialogue. But keep in mind, that the route to shared values is clarification of personal values—for you and others. You have to find a way to promote personal exploration at the same time as you are finding ways to come to agreement about the principles for which you collectively stand.

Aren't leaders born? Can you really develop the skills to lead?

There still persists, even in this new millennium, an insidious myth that leadership is reserved for only a very few of us. That myth is perpetuated daily every time someone asks, "Are leaders born or made?" Whenever we're asked this question—which is almost every time we give a speech or conduct a class or workshop—our answer is this: "Yes, of course, all leaders are born. We've never met a leader who wasn't. So are all accountants, poets, athletes, physicists, zoologists, you name it." We're all born. What we do with what we have before we die is up to us. Leadership is not a contained in a gene any more, or any less, than other pursuits. Leadership is not a place, it's not a position, and it's not a secret code that can't be deciphered by ordinary people. Leadership is an observable set of skills and abilities. So, how do you develop those skills? Like any other skill. Feedback on your current abilities, training to learn to improve, and practice, practice, practice.

Practice #2: Inspire a Shared Vision

What's the difference between a vision and a goal?

Vision is about the long term. Goals are short-term. Think of the vision as the ultimate destination and a goal as a milestone along the way. Vision is the picture on the box top of the jigsaw puzzle and a goal is like the cloud in the upper left corner of the puzzle. Think of visions as imaginative and goals as quantifiable. Think of visions as aspirations, and goals as targets.

What's the difference between a vision and a mission?

Visions and missions have similarities, but they are not the same thing. Vision comes from the word meaning "see" and mission comes from the word meaning "send." Vision is about your dreams, but mission is about the actions you take to carry out those dreams. We might go on a mission to help people with AIDS in Africa, but our vision might be of a world without AIDS. You might go on a mission to start up a plant in China, but your vision may be to virtually connect the people of the world.

What if my organization doesn't have a clear vision or one that meets the criteria of "an ideal and unique image of the future for the common good?"

It would be ideal if all organizations were crystal-clear about their visions, and if all executives excelled at Inspire a Shared Vision. But whether or not your organization has a clear vision, and whether or not your boss has a clear vision, your constituents expect you to know where you are going. A person's immediate manager has the most impact on performance. Leadership is personal. It's your job.

That said, if you aren't clear about your organization's vision, you need to have a courageous conversation about this issue with your manager. It is such a fundamental part of leadership that you have to take the initiative. Have a conversation about the vision for your part of the organization and how you see your part of the organization fitting into the whole. Appeal to your manager's aspirations. Your manager is as much a constituent of your vision as are your direct reports.

There isn't much vision in our organization, but we've managed to be successful. Please explain to me how we've been able to be successful without a clear vision.

We know that the clearer visions are, the more productive people are, and the more engaged they are in their jobs. But there are organizations that are "visionless" yet still manage to move forward, at least for a while. Whether or not this is a sustainable situation is questionable. In one study Jim and Barry conducted, they asked managers how well their leaders articulated a vision. Those managers who felt that their senior executives effectively communicated the vision reported significantly higher levels of:

- Job satisfaction
- Commitment and loyalty
- Esprit de corps
- Clarity about organizational values
- Pride in the organization
- Organizational productivity

You use the word "constituent" and not "follower." Why?

We think the word follower implies a more passive role. Constituents are active participants in a process, and that is the sense we want to convey. The important point is that you understand that the vision has to be a shared vision for people to want to enlist in it. That requires getting to know what others aspire to achieve and what their hopes and dreams are. You can't impose a vision on others. They have to feel engaged in it to invest their energy in moving toward it.

I'm not good at inspiring; I'm no Martin Luther King. What can I do to become more comfortable in presenting an inspirational message to my constituents?

The first thing you have to do to be inspirational is to believe in the message yourself. You can't fake it. So, you've got to do a gut check and ask yourself, "How much do I believe in what I am saying?" When we truly care about something we're naturally enthusiastic, and you'll also be more confident in it because you know you care. Also, keep in mind that public speaking is the number one fear among many people, so you're not alone. We recommend that every leader take a public speaking course to learn some methods and to learn to become more comfortable and confident in front of a group.

You say being forward-looking is the one quality that differentiates leaders from other credible people. Just how far into the future do I have to look?

Here's a way to determine how "forward-looking" you need to be. Think about the project that you are now working on that has the completion date that is the farthest out into the future. With that in mind, ask yourself this question: What will my team and I be doing when this project is over? You should have an answer to that question. If you don't, then you're not adding the "forward-looking" value of a leader. You should be looking out at least beyond the completion of your longest term project. For frontline leaders that date might be one year out, for middle level managers it might be three to five years out, and for some people who are leading large organizations or movements it might be fifteen years. As a rule of thumb, we recommend that you stretch yourself to look out five years into the future.

How can I possibly look out one year, let alone five years, when things are changing so rapidly and the environment is so uncertain and unpredictable?

You have no option. It's what people expect from their leaders. If you're going to be in a leadership role, then you have to assume responsibility for the future of those you lead. Period. We recognize that the farther out you look the fuzzier things are. The future is uncertain, and we're not suggesting that Inspiring a Shared Vision is about producing a perfectly predictable plan or a detailed map. A vision is about possibilities, not probabilities. It's about hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Surely you can talk about your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for those you lead. Your only limitation is your imagination. That's where all great adventures begin.

What can a leader do to inspire others during times of great uncertainty?

Leadership in uncertain times is really no different than leadership in certain times. The fundamentals are the same, and the best leaders pay attention to the fundamentals no matter the context. The difference is in intensity, frequency, and visibility. To cut through all the confusion and noise in the environment you have to turn up the volume. While engaging in each of the Five Practices is essential, you have to Inspire others through your words and actions. You've got to believe. People want to know why they should be getting up in the morning to sell insurance or write more software code. There's nothing more demoralizing than a leader who can't clearly articulate why we're doing what we're doing. You've also to act. People expect our leaders to do something during uncertain times. They won't tolerate endless debates and frustrating indecisiveness. Leaders have to make something happen. Action consistent with words is the indication that you're serious about what you believe. You also must unite your constituents around a common cause and connect with them as human beings. We need to feel that we're part of something, that we're in this together, and that we're not alone. Above all else, remember this: positive emotions are contagious. Leaders have to keep our hope alive.

Practice #3: Challenge the Process

Why is experimenting so essential to leadership?

Thomas Edison said, "I failed my way to success." It took over five thousand experiments to develop the filament for the electric bulb. "Every one of these experiments taught me something," explained Edison, and that's precisely the mantra of leaders. Leaders don't see failures and mistakes as the end of the world, but simply another opportunity to learn and know something that they didn't know before and, often, had no way of knowing in advance.

Doesn't this mean that all we ever do is sit around and learn rather than getting something done?

People really do want to be great (or at least greater than they are today), but we're intimidated, overwhelmed, and daunted by the size, scale, and scope of many of the challenges. So, as the Sierra Club advises: "Think Globally, Act Locally." Ask, "What's one thing you could do on this project or idea to get started?" One of the truisms in the behavioral sciences is that those who try are more successful than those that don't try. So the issue to consider is how to get people to take the first step and to "give it a go."

How can I create an atmosphere for experimenting and for learning?

The key idea here is somewhat paradoxical. We contend that risk taking is directly related to the extent to which people feel safe. If you want to help people extend themselves beyond their comfort zones and "the way we've always done it around here," you've got to do things that make them feel safe. For example, reducing the cost of failure, expanding the benefits of trying, taking one step at a time, going first yourself (so that if anyone is to look foolish, it will be you), providing practice opportunities, establishing pilot and demonstration projects, and so on.

Why does the process of "small wins" work?

It makes it easier for people to say "yes" in the first place, and then with each successive accomplishment, easier still to say "yes" and stay the course. A small win builds confidence. Small wins are easier to comprehend, and existing skills and resources seem sufficient to get started. A small win needs fewer resources, and hence both the stress and cost of doing something new is minimized. The result of a small win is to begin building some order out of what was previously chaos.

I don't consider myself a very imaginative person, so how can I be a better idea-generator?

Studies show that leaders are not necessarily any more or less creative, imaginative, or insightful (or intelligent for that matter) than any other people. What they do excel at is "outsight," the ability to look outside of themselves and their experiences. So try looking in what may seem like strange places. Listen to people who are

not like you and who have experiences other than yours. Take advantage of all the ideas that already exist "out there" and see whether you can find one, or adapt one, to fit your challenges and opportunities.

We keep making the same mistakes again and again around here. Any advice?

If all you do is jump from one project to the next without taking time for reflection, you're likely to get into a habit of problem solving (or mistake producing) rather than learning. After completing a project, determine which actions and practices proved helpful and which did not. Consider how you can replicate the positives and minimize the negatives on the next project. Even better, before starting the next project, ask, "What problems, challenges, or opportunities are likely to emerge in the course of the project? What could we do to avoid them or at least handle them effectively if they do come up?"

Why is experimenting so essential to leadership?

Thomas Edison said, "I failed my way to success." It took over 5,000 experiments to develop the filament for the electric bulb. How many would you have tested before you gave up? "Everyone of these experiments taught me something," explained Edison, and that's precisely the mantra of leaders. Leaders don't see failures and mistakes as the end of the world, but simply another opportunity to learn and know something that they didn't know before, and, often, had no way of knowing in advance of the experiment.

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People really do want to be great (or at least greater than they are today) but we're intimidated, overwhelmed, and daunted by the size, scale and scope of many of the challenges. So, as the Sierra Club advises: "Think Globally, Act Locally." What's one thing we could do on this project or idea to get started? One of the truisms in the behavioral sciences is that those who try are more successful than those that don't try. So the issue to consider is how do you get people to take the first step and to "give it a go."

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The key idea here is somewhat paradoxical. We contend that risk-taking is directly related to the extent to which people feel safe. So, if you want to help people extend themselves beyond their comfort zone and the way we've always done it around here, you've got to do things that make them feel safe. For example, reducing the cost of failure, expanding the benefits of trying, taking one step at a time, going first yourself (so that if anyone is to look foolish, you're willing to be the first one), providing practice opportunities, establishing pilot and demonstration projects, creating skunk works, and so on.

Why does the process of "small wins" work?

The concept of "small wins" works because it makes it easier for people to say "yes" in the first place, and then with each successive accomplishment, easier still to say "yes" and stay the course. A small win builds confidence. Small wins are easier to comprehend, and existing skills and resources seem sufficient to get started. A small win needs fewer resources and hence both the stress and cost of doing something new is minimized. The result of a small win is to begin building some order out of what was previously chaos.

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Studies show that leaders are not necessarily any more or less creative, imaginative, or insightful (or intelligent for that matter) than any other people. What they do excel at is outsight or the ability to look outside of themselves and their experiences. So rather than simply looking inside for your inspiration, try looking in what may seem like strange places. Most importantly, talk and listen with people who are not like you and who have experiences other than yours. Take advantage of all the ideas that already exist "out there" and see if you can find one, or adapt one, to fit your challenges and opportunities.

We keep making the same mistakes again and again around here. Any advice?

Try spending time after completing a project and determine what actions and practices on that project

proved helpful and which ones did not. Consider how you can replicate the positives and minimize the negatives on the next project. If all you do is jump from one project to the next one without providing any time for reflection and discernment, it is little wonder that you get into a habit of problem solving (or mistake producing) rather than learning. Even better, prior to the start of the next project, consider doing some scenario thinking about the future. What problems, challenges or opportunities are likely to emerge in the course of this project? When they do surface, what ideas do we have for how we might deal with them up-front (like now), or at least, how we can most effectively tackle them later.

Practice #4: Enable Others to Act

Is "Enable" in this process the same thing as "Enabling" in a 12-step program?

Some of you might know "enabling" as a negative (for example, from the 12-step process), but for us, it's about developing talent, skill, and confidence. If you look up "enable" in the dictionary, you'll find that it means "to make able." If you look up "empower" in the dictionary, you'll find it also means "to make able." Enable and empower mean the same thing. Therefore, despite some who see the term as a negative, "enable" has a very positive literal meaning. Enable is not about giving license or about facilitating someone's dependence. It's not about giving the keys to the car to a four-year-old. It's about trust and making someone feel strong and capable.

Isn't business about being competitive? You guys don't seem to get it. Capitalism is all about competition, and in a competition there are winners and losers.

Being or doing the best is not necessarily the same thing as winning. Someone can not do his best and still beat another person. Conceivably, if your "competition" is poor, all you have to be is mediocre to "win." That is not what Personal-Best Leadership is all about. It's about setting new standards. It's about exceeding what others have done before. It's about setting records. The point is to stay focused on being and doing your best—at excelling, not winning.

There are circumstances that require one party to win at another's expense (the classic win-lose scenario). But keep in mind that win-lose can result in everyone losing. You may feel like a winner, but you can make certain that someone else feels like a loser. And if you ever need that person's support in the future, you will have a tough time getting it. In that way, you may end up being a loser in the future.

I've seen some people become successful at the expense of others in the early stages of their career, but they don't seem to make it past a certain level. Why is that?

Research clearly indicates that those who get "derailed" or knocked off track in their quest for corporate advancement are those lacking "emotional intelligence." Their inability to manage their own emotions or their inability to support others eventually catches up with them. To put it another way, the most important quality required for the top three jobs in a company is "being able to get along with subordinates." Those who see subordinates as people to "boss around" get to a point where few people want to work with them. That's why the skills involved in Strengthening Others are so important.

Is enable others to act related at all to what the people at Gallup call "Engagement?"

Yes, there is some relationship between what we call Enable Others to Act and what Gallup refers to as "Engagement." For example, Gallup includes in their measures of what they call "engaged" employees this item: "This last year, I have had the opportunities at work to learn and grow." They also include an item on "I have a friend at work." There are relationships between these items and some of the behaviors that constitute EOA. However, there is no one-for-one correlation, because other items in Gallup's work are a part of other practices in our model. For up-to-date information on Gallup's research on engagement, visit their website, www.gallup.com.

Isn't business about being competitive? You guys don't seem to get it that there's a "war" out there in our business!

Being or doing the best is not necessarily the same thing as winning. Indeed when situations or circumstances require one party to win at another's expense (classic win-lose scenario) you can bet that a lot of energy, time and talent is being siphoned off to beating the other party and not to doing one's best. Win-lose too often results in everyone losing. If you ever feel too much like a winner, make certain that it's not because someone else feels like a loser. There will be a time you will need their support and it won't be forthcoming and/or you've just made an enemy who wants to beat you personally more than they may care about the organizational outcome (or even their personal outcome).

We're a very competitive company—but we focus this energy on the competition and not on ourselves. Does this make sense?

You've got to know where to draw the line. Sure your company wants to "win" the sale against another company, and we've established a number of fair and equitable practices for doing so. We might call this testing ourselves, and we can see how a capitalistic and free marketplace outperforms and out-produces the economic alternatives.

How about internal competition? Doesn't it foster this same sort of "testing"?

Everyone inside the company has to be working toward a common vision and within a shared set of values. These meta-matters can't vary between marketing, accounting, human resources, operations, or whichever department. Nor can they vary, for that matter, between how the company does business in one part of the world versus another part. You can't build trust between people (and departments) unless there is a common set of understandings about the rules of the game and the way that people play it.

I've seen some people be successful in the early stages of their career at the expense of other people, but they don't often make it past a certain organizational level. Why is that?

Research clearly indicates that those who get "de-railed" or knocked off the track in their quest for corporate advancement are those lacking in sensitivity to others. Put another way, the most important quality required for one of the top three jobs in companies is "being able to get along with subordinates." All along the way, there is no way that managers and would-be leaders can get extraordinary results by doing all the work themselves. Indeed, as people move up the corporate ladder they become increasingly dependent upon others to get the organization's actual work (processes, services, goods, etc.) completed.

How can I tell that my company, or for that matter, my manager trusts me?

In a leadership context, you've got to determine if your company (manager) seems interested, concerned, and actively involved in making you a better employee (person) than you would otherwise be on your own? How much are they investing in your development? What sort of job opportunities are there for you to learn, practice, and grow in skills and abilities? Is time being devoted to helping you learn from your experiences (regardless of the results)? Are you finding yourself listened to and consulted with? Are you and your actions visible to others and are you receiving credit for your accomplishments?

How is Enabling related to the process of empowerment?

It's our believe that people are already very powerful and that organizations need to spend less time "supposedly" filling people up (with power) and more time letting them use the power (energy) they already possess. Managers often used empowerment to hold people back as they define the terms and conditions for others. Leaders remove obstacles and barriers so that people can do what they are already capable of doing. Of course, these two concepts come together quite nicely around training and development opportunities but they begin philosophical at different starting points on the continuum of human potential.

How is Enabling related to building commitment?

There is a direct correlation between Enabling Others to Act and the psychological process of commitment. Commitment is built when a person experiences a choice about what he or she is asked to do. With choice, there really is no freedom to act. Commitment is also enhanced when peoples' choices are made public. Being visible to others reinforces both the act of choice and the intentionality of the choice maker. We put pressure on ourselves to meet a promise we've made in front of others. And commitment to a course of action is strengthened when the very first action itself makes it difficult to rescind. It's easier to keep going forward than to admit that we've changed our minds. This also explains why highly motivated folks often outproduce their less motivated (even if more qualified) peers.

Practice #5: Encourage the Heart

Don't some people perceive encourage the heart as soft, or warm and fuzzy?

Some people might view it this way, but leaders do not. More often, those who throw out labels like "warm and fuzzy" or "touchy-feely" are not very comfortable or experienced in relating with people's emotional well-being. They are likely to be more comfortable managing activities or getting people to comply, instead of getting them to commit to something. Jim and Barry's research is clear—those who practice Encourage the Heart are more likely to produce extraordinary results.

Does encourage the heart mean you are supposed to recognize people for just doing their jobs? Isn't that why we pay them?

People need to be recognized for their accomplishments and encouraged to reach for higher levels of performance. By the way, how valuable are people you know you can count on to do their jobs day in and day out? Aren't you grateful for them? Sometimes, it is the recognition that people receive for the small things that most inspires them to tackle the larger ones.

What do you do when the organization's recognition programs reward the accomplishments of only the most visible workers (like salespeople) and people in the background feel turned off by all kinds of recognition?

As a leader, you may not have much influence on the organizational programs that do not recognize the right things. But you can make sure that you recognize the right things in your own groups. Practice some of the behaviors listed in the LPI with your people. You have the ability to make your people feel very special.

If I do some of that Encouraging the Heart stuff you suggest, my people will think I'm phony. It's just not my style. How do I deal with this?

Sincerity is essential to Encouraging the Heart. It has to come from the heart, not the head, otherwise people will smell a phony. One way to make sure that you are sincere is to have clear standards that everyone should meet, ways to measure performance, and a reliable and timely means of getting information on how people are performing against clear standards. Also, don't make such a big deal out of it. You can encourage someone in hundreds of different ways as long as you're sincere.

Why should I have to praise people for doing a good job? That's what I pay them for.

Pay is not praise. Pay is part of the work contract that people make with you. It's what we all expect for doing our jobs. Praise goes beyond pay. When someone performs above the normal expectations, they should be recognized for it because they need to know that it matters. If you don't express your appreciation for their efforts, they'll think that you don't care whether they put forth more effort or not. You're highly unlikely to see that behavior repeated. In short, you should recognize and praise people because doing so is more likely to improve performance than ignoring the actions.

Even if Encouraging the Heart isn't about pay, I don't have any extra money to reward people with. How can I afford to recognize people?

Again, recognition and celebration are not about money. They're about showing your appreciation for contributions to your organization's vision, mission, values, and goals. You can do that with a thank you note, a conversation over a cup of coffee, an extra day off, a mention in a report, or an acknowledgment at a meeting. There are hundreds of ways. The only limits are your creativity and your sincerity.

How frequently should you recognize someone?

The research suggests that people need to be recognized for a job well done at least once a week for them to be motivated to go above and beyond. So, if you have ten direct reports, that's ten expressions of appreciation per week, about two per day. Make it a habit to show your appreciation twice a day to two different people, and you'll have no trouble at all. Of course, this means you have to be on the lookout for actions to recognize.

Can't you overdo recognition until it becomes trivial?

Sure, you can trivialize recognition, but it's usually not from doing too much of it. After all, just ask yourself, "Am I being thanked too much for contributing to the success of this project?" Chances are that you're not, and others aren't either. The sense that you are "overdoing" it comes when you aren't genuine, when the recognition is out of proportion to the contribution, or when you haven't made it personal.