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TWO INGREDIENTS TO ENHANCE SPEED AND RESULTS

#1: "SLOW DOWN TO SPEED UP"--ENGAGE PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY.

"Slow down to speed up" means taking time to **engage** people to find out what they think and feel. **Engagement** includes such factors as dialogue for alignment, participation in decisions and work design, fostering genuine commitment, testing and exploring new approaches. Taking time to empower an aligned, committed, creative workforce enables *overall* faster progress.

#2: BALANCE ENGAGEMENT WITH SKILLFUL EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY.

Paradoxically, **exercise of authority** is just as crucial an ingredient in order to achieve both speed and the best results.¹ Authority includes such factors as defining a vision, setting direction, making clear decisions, setting standards, driving execution, assuring performance.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THESE TWO FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT?

Research studies identify multiple elements which contribute to speed and results, Engagement and authority as defined above are at least two of the essential components:

- **A study by The Forum Corporation** showed that companies with faster speed of execution had 52% higher operating profit. The various elements distinguishing the faster companies include authority (such as clarity and driving execution) and an emphasis on engaging people as opposed to exclusively on pace and efficiency of work.²
- **Research by the Gallup Organization** identified 12 work conditions, as rated by employees, that correlated with performance. "I know what is expected of me at work" (i.e. clarity from authority) had the highest correlation with performance followed by elements associated with engagement such as "my opinions seem to count."³
- **Research from the Hay/McBer consulting firm** correlated 6 leadership styles with a high performance organizational climate. The highest correlation was with the "authoritative style" followed closely by more participatory (i.e. engaging) styles. Effective leaders use a mixture of styles including both authority and engagement.⁴

BALANCING AUTHORITY AND ENGAGEMENT IS A COMPLEX CHALLENGE.

The right mix of authority and engagement will vary moment to moment. Studies show that time and performance pressures may cause even professionals committed to the people side of things to fall into over-emphasizing authority.⁵ Then, engagement and results suffer.

On the other hand, when focusing on engagement, leaders can fall into over-emphasizing consensus, active listening and empathy. Authority can then be insufficient and results suffer.

So, there are not simple criteria or checklists to follow. Maintaining the right balance of authority and engagement requires continuous learning and course correction. Taking time for self reflection, collegial consultation or services such as I provide can save time in the long run.

REFERENCES

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