



INSPIRATIONAL MANAGER

**HOW TO BUILD
RELATIONSHIPS THAT
DELIVER RESULTS**

2nd EDITION
.....

JUDITH LEARY-JOYCE

Inspirational Manager

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This book is dedicated to all managers

You too can be inspirational.

I'm rooting for you!

***Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate,
but that we are powerful beyond measure.***

Marianne Williamson

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About the author



Judith Leary-Joyce has a real passion for developing great workplaces, wanting everyone to jump out of bed each morning, eager to get on with their work. As CEO of Great Companies Consulting, she spends her time supporting organisations that have an appetite for delivering great results through their people. She has considerable experience of consulting plus coaching/facilitating leaders, managers and significant influencers in a wide range of organisations. Her psychological background gives her a deep understanding of the factors that drive people to make their best efforts and perform brilliantly.

Judith is also author of *Becoming an Employer of Choice*, a book that explores how you can contribute to the development and maintenance of a great workplace. Her book *The Psychology of Success* (Prentice Hall, 2009) focuses on what it takes to be successful time after time in business and in your life generally.

Foreword

If you have ever been lucky enough to have experienced working with an inspirational manager you will know the tremendous value they create for you personally and also for the organisation. We have probably all had the reverse experience of working with a manager who isn't that great, and we know the negative impact that they can have. By the fact that you are reading this book, I suspect that you are on a personal quest to be an inspirational manager yourself. You might already be there but just not know it, or you might have already discovered the tough challenges that you encounter in being a manager.

This book sets out in a practical and pragmatic way the route towards becoming that inspirational manager. The key insights throughout the book are based on research and real life case studies. This isn't all about theory, it has been generated by studying some of the very best managers – who better to learn from?

Every organisation is striving to enhance performance and to differentiate themselves to become an employer of choice. If you believe in the philosophy of Employee Engagement, then you will know inspirational managers are an essential ingredient in creating an engaged organisation.

The value of organisational leadership is well known, but the value of everyday inspirational management seems less well understood. It is true that every leader has to manage and every manager has to lead. This book focuses on the essentials of great management and how this can make a difference to the lives of many people and to the success of the organisation.

The key lessons set out by Judith Leary-Joyce should be understood by all of us who have the responsibility of being a manager. *Inspirational Manager* should ideally be used as a well ‘thumbed’ reference guide as well as an inspirational read in its own right. As each chapter unfolds, you will discover new and exciting insights.

Good luck with your quest!

*Matthew Brearley – UK HR Director
Vodafone UK Limited*

Acknowledgements

No one writes a book alone – at least not the way I’ve chosen to do it. It’s actually quite a sociable affair.

When I had the idea for this book, I spoke to my PA, Sue Simmons, who did her best not to wince. I contacted some companies that I knew had won Employer of Choice awards and asked if I could speak to their best manager. As I discovered when I wrote my last book, they were remarkably welcoming and open, so very soon we were on our way.

The first task was to get some meeting dates booked and, fortunately, once Sue focuses her mind, there is no stopping her. Manoeuvring my complex jigsaw of a diary, she arranged appointments for me to meet the managers and organised all my other work around it. When I hit those moments of overwhelm, it was Sue who kept me going. You are reading this today because I couldn’t bear for all her determination to go to waste.

The research stage was the best bit. I spent six months travelling around the country talking to some stunning people, their teams and their own managers. It was really exciting and I always left the discussions feeling invigorated, inspired and quite sure that writing this book was the right thing to do.

I did have one solitary section in the middle of the process when my husband stuck a label marked ‘Quiet, author at work’ on the conservatory door. If you ever think of writing a book, don’t do it when the builders are around! My one contact in that very intense month was Stephen Partridge, editor of my last book, who knows me and my style well. As ever, he helped me stay on track, suggested great ideas for the format and kept me laughing with wonderful stories of his family and experiences. He has been a sage and a mentor throughout.

Sixty-five thousands words and a sore arm later, I met Samantha Jackson, my editor at Prentice Hall, and the sociable side returned. Sam has been a real steadying influence, encouraging me always to write in a way that will make the content most valuable for you, the inspirational manager.

Of course I needed a reader – someone who would tell me the brutal truth when I needed to hear it. John Leary-Joyce – husband, CEO and Executive Coach – was that man! He sat in bed late at night and early morning reading, scribbling and pondering. The toughest conversation came when he realised the third rewrite of a chapter was still not right. He girded his loins and told me the truth – like every inspirational manager must. He also sat patiently while I stormed about the place, then made me tea as I started all over again. I hope you’ll agree, he was right to ‘expect the best’.

Once the book was ready, Sue then began the complex process of making sure everyone agreed with what I’d written about them. The office was like a war room with heads spinning, endless cups of tea and occasional heartwarming chats on the phone to ‘our managers’. We feel now as if we know them really well.

My team of GCC consultants were constantly there in the background, reminding me of my passion for great companies and inspirational managers – people *must* be treated with respect and enjoy the many hours they spend at work, life is just too short for anything else. They read, advised and challenged my thinking and we have had great fun together, exploring how to convey this material in an ‘inspirational’ style for our clients.

Of course, I can’t finish without saying a huge ‘THANK YOU’ to all the inspirational managers, the managers of the inspirational managers and their fantastic teams who spoke so openly about their work, their mistakes and successes. It has been a huge honour to work with you all and I have many memories I shall treasure.

Judith Leary-Joyce

As part of the research for this book, Judith interviewed HR directors from the organisations involved to find out how they support the development of Inspirational Managers. In order to read the important insights from this original research visit www.greatcompaniesconsulting.com and enter the password IMHR0607.

CHAPTER

**The beliefs of an
inspirational manager**



‘Don’t be rigid, experiment with your own approach and create an environment where other people will experiment too.’

Ian Martin, DTC

Della Garmory at Nationwide believes wholeheartedly in telling the truth and being trustworthy. A high-performing member of her team was delivering great results, but there was no more development she could offer them. Of course, she could have stayed quiet and reaped the benefits by keeping the person within her team, but that would not have sat well with Della’s values. Instead she said, ‘You’ve outgrown this job – I can’t make it any bigger for you and you’ve already got enough skills and development for the role. You are brilliant at what you do, so we need to find you a better job outside of the team.’

For some that would feel like professional suicide – why on earth give up such a high performer? But Della knew that she couldn’t live with herself if she let the person languish in her team, not to mention the fact that she would probably lose them anyway.

Facing this sort of dilemma clarifies what you really believe in. When the way ahead seems obvious, even when it is not easy, then you understand exactly how important your belief is to you. And in the case of an inspirational manager, it is important to your people too and part of what makes you such a great person to work for. Imagine how valued Della’s high performer felt and the comfort it gave the rest of her team to know that she really did have their best interests at heart.

Key beliefs drive us when the chips are down and shine through when fast decisions are needed. Being clear what you believe in means you will have a consistent approach and this is what people trust. Inspirational managers can be relied on to do what they say they will do and that is possible because they have tied their colours to the mast of their key beliefs.

It is a big demand to consistently live these beliefs, but the cost of giving up on them will be even higher. It is a matter of self-respect and if you give that up then others will lose respect for you, too. However much you try to rationalise your behaviour, nothing will really work. You just feel awful, embarrassed or ashamed. My guess is that you can look back and find situations where you felt just like that about yourself – I know I can. Even

when the memories are years old, they still have the power to make you cringe. That is because you went against what you believe to be right and you haven't managed to forgive yourself yet.

It is true that beliefs shine through in the tough times, but inspirational managers don't wait for extremis, they live them day by day:

- ▶ what they say and what they do always matches up
- ▶ it is a matter of personal pride to be trustworthy
- ▶ they believe in telling the truth
- ▶ they want the best for and from their people.

Most important of all, they never compromise on what they believe to be right. In other areas, they will change, listen to other views, alter course and use good ideas from every source, but their values are not for turning! And this is part of what makes them so inspirational.

“Their values are not for turning!”

What inspirational managers believe in

The job of a manager is to work *through* other people, ensuring that they deliver the desired outcomes in a way that is both satisfying for them and productive for the organisation. A bit like being a parent, your job is to help other people grow and discover their strengths and talents. It requires you to make choices – some of them will be tough and some will need to be made so quickly that you will be driven by your instincts rather than rational thought. It is your beliefs that create those instincts and determine which way you jump.

Whatever else they hold dear in their lives, inspirational managers all believe that the only way to deliver top-quality results is by enabling their people to do their best work. This breaks down into some fundamental beliefs that are essential to the job. The essence of being an inspirational manager comes down to believing in and acting on the following core ideas:

- ▶ everyone has strengths
- ▶ strong relationships support excellence
- ▶ tell the truth at all times
- ▶ be consistent.

Everyone has strengths

Everyone has strengths they can use in their lives. However hopeless a person may feel, there will always be something that they do really well and it is the manager's job to help them access that strength. Part of what is so exciting about inspirational managers is that they don't believe in underperformance, just the wrong person for the job. Looked at in this way, the task is to understand the person's strengths, as well as the underpinning core talent, so you can help them develop. And if this job doesn't suit their strengths and talent, the task is to help them find work where they can shine.

“The task is to understand the person's strengths so you can help them develop.”

Charlotte Butterfield, at Badenoch & Clark, managed Dave Roberts when he was promoted to a team leader role.

It wasn't an easy move for me and Charlotte had to be brutally honest about my performance, despite my defensiveness. I think I was rather difficult to manage! In time she helped me realise my weaknesses and strengths, but she had to work really hard at it. She used the drip method, bringing in ideas gradually.

If I look back over my appraisals, it was done very subtly – praising the good stuff, highlighting the weak in a way that enabled me to develop. She kept going with this and finally the penny dropped. It took 12 months' discussion and thorough analysis in the 6-month review, one-to-ones, etc., but now I am much more effective with my team.

Action

- ▶ Consider how much you believe in people having their own strengths and talents. If you are not sure, look at people in your team and find one thing that you think they are already really good at and one thing you suspect they may be good at.
- ▶ Think about when you saw another person blossom into a new role or situation. Include yourself by reviewing when you found a new interest or skill that you didn't know you had.
- ▶ Arrange to talk with your team members to find out what they find most exciting about work and see how you can maximise that energy.

Strong relationships support excellence

The matter of developing excellence is a tough one that will lead other managers to give up or pile on the pressure. Inspirational managers put faith in building strong relationships, because they know we all work hard for those we care about. And as I discovered, when a manager is really positive, people care about them a lot. It creates a virtuous circle – by developing a positive attitude in the team, managers get a positive attitude back and the quality of the work improves.

“When a manager is really positive, people care about them a lot. It creates a virtuous circle.”

Pam and Madeline were on their knees after struggling for nine months without appropriate management arrangements due to a radical restructure at Northampton Borough Council. When Fran Rodgers arrived they took to her immediately. Apparently easy-going and laid-back, she was clear about her expectations without being intimidating and always let them know what the priorities were. As a result, their trust began to build and, although the tough job of turning around an ailing service remained, they finally felt that they had the support they needed.

Fran took the time to get to know them all from the outset, rather than just bowing to the exceptionally high demands of the job. She made it clear that she was there for the long haul and determined that they would

see it through together. Madeline described her as being ‘like an anchor’. Regular one-to-one meetings meant that they always knew they could have quality time with her to talk through their needs and concerns. She is part of the team, but also takes her place as a manager providing them with the support that they need. In this team, more than any other, it is these high levels of trust and strong relationships that will bring them through the difficult challenges ahead.

Action

- ▶ Think about the relationships that have been most important to you in your working life. How have they affected your attitude to manager–team relationships?
- ▶ What were the main features of the most positive relationships you have had at work?
- ▶ Apply those criteria to the relationships you have with your team and consider what you are willing to do to improve them.

Tell the truth at all times

This is a hard belief to abide by, but essential to your development as an inspirational manager. If you want high levels of trust and a team that will deliver exceptional results, they need to know you will tell the truth. When the news is good, this is not a problem, but when the news is tough, strong belief and commitment is what gets you through.

Di missed a deadline at Bromford Housing Group and sat down to talk it through with Helena Moore, her manager. The team approach to an instance such as this is to learn from the experience, so the main thrust of the conversation was about what had happened and what needed to be different next time. Helena believes wholeheartedly in telling the truth in a way that ensures people retain their dignity: ‘Always be straightforward. Discuss the issue and be transparent, never mince your words, but then give them time to recover and decide on the next step.’

The conversation was useful for Di and she left knowing how to move forward. Her greatest concern was that she really didn’t want to let Helena

down: ‘I want to deliver because I really want Helena to be successful.’ So, there is a paradox. Delivering tough messages doesn’t put people off as most of us fear, but, in fact, can make them even more committed. It is when we go through hard times together, that strong relationships are built.

“When we go through hard times ... strong relationships are built.”

Action

- ▶ What is your attitude to telling the truth? Do you back off or believe that it is the right thing to do?
- ▶ Think about a time when you have backed off and notice what the impact was.
- ▶ Do the same for a time when you told the truth in an effective way and think about the impact on yourself and others. Which one do you feel best about?

Be consistent

This is really important to the people you work with. How the manager behaves determines how other people feel about their working day. It is a tough one to accept because surely everyone is entitled to an off day once in a while? Inspirational managers believe not, or at least that if the off day takes over, then you must acknowledge that you are being a pain and ask for forgiveness. People have to know where they stand. They need to:

- ▶ know they can trust their manager
- ▶ understand what will happen when they make a mistake
- ▶ be able to reach their manager when they need to.

These are fundamental to the development of a safe working environment.

At Data Connection, all work is done out in the open. Nic Larkin expects everyone in his team to talk honestly about what is happening, acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and to show their work to someone else for comment – and that includes himself. That the team can see these

processes adhered to every single day increases the sense of security and trust, which is so important in a high-tech development company like this. Couple this with the fact that Nic sets the tone by owning his own mistakes and you have a team who know they will get the level of support they need.

Action

- ▶ What impact did you make when you entered the office this morning? How did your team react?
- ▶ Do your team know exactly where they stand with you? Do they know for sure that you will support them when the going gets tough? If not, what impact do you think this has?
- ▶ Think about a manager you have worked for who was totally consistent in their behaviour. What did you take from that and how might you build that into your own management style?

The benefits of being an inspirational manager

Incorporate these beliefs into your daily working life and you will begin to see the benefits of being an inspirational manager. To quote Helena Moore, ‘I get personal satisfaction from seeing people develop. There will always be tough times, but the highs outweigh the lows and make it all worthwhile.’

*“I get personal satisfaction from seeing people develop.
... the highs outweigh the lows and make it all
worthwhile.”*

It is a big task to put people first, but there are huge benefits – not least that loyalty levels will go off the scale. When Di told me that she wanted Helena to be successful, it was by no means the first time I had heard that. Teams led by inspirational managers become an inspiration themselves as they:

- ▶ deliver excellent results
- ▶ keep developing their strengths
- ▶ give what it takes to make their manager shine.

As an inspirational manager, you must truly believe in what you do. People have acute radar for a fake, so make sure that you demonstrate your passion and commitment. Take Ben Lee, at Mace, an ex-brickie foreman who specialises in highly colourful language and attitude to match. There is no way that anything other than the real thing will get past him.

Ben Wood, his manager, was leading a project team for Heathrow Terminal Five. Despite Ben Lee's flamboyant style, Ben Wood saw his potential and wanted him to flourish. He also wanted to retain that energy, albeit it cleaned up a bit, because he realised just how much could be achieved. Ben Lee was very straightforward and a quick learner, so it didn't take him long to pick up on the encouragement to 'stop shouting!'.

As a result, he did some great work with the architect, has become a friend and support to Ben Wood and begun raising his profile with other managers and directors. It was that inspirational manager ability to recognise a diamond in the rough that allowed Ben Lee's spirit and spark to be channelled for the good of the team, the business and both Bens.

Managing upwards in an inspirational way

So far, we have talked about managing your own team, but how does it work when you are managing upwards? This brings us into the realms of organisational values and the prevailing management approach.

Organisational values

If you are fortunate, you will work in an organisation that places a high value on the development of talent and believes in being honest, consistent and trustworthy. It will make your job so much easier because you won't

be working against the grain and will receive all the support you need to lead your team in an inspirational way.

If, on the other hand, the business values different things, you have to decide how you will manage it. You have a number of choices.

- ▶ Hold to your own beliefs and build a strong, inspirational team. As soon as you can, make it clear what you are doing and encourage others to join you. In time, as results show the impact of a people-centred approach to management, you may find that you can share your ideas and beliefs more widely in the organisation.
- ▶ If you are in a changing culture, look for other managers who are keen to change alongside you. The more support you have at this stage the better. Beliefs and attitudes don't change overnight and everyone needs consistent challenge to be the best they can be. Talk about successes, but talk about failures, too – remember, this is where most learning will come from.
- ▶ If the difference between you and others is too wide and you can see no way to exert your influence or to work in the way that you believe to be right, then you have to make choices. It may sound drastic, but all you can do is leave or decide to stay and risk being unhappy.

Supporting a new culture

Ian Martin, a manager at the Diamond Trading Company (DTC, part of the De Beers group), was tasked with pulling together a team to build a new model for pricing diamonds. It was a pretty daunting prospect at the outset, but he was clear that he wanted not only to develop the product but also a strong team of people who would build on each other's strengths. De Beers has a long history of looking after its employees, but the culture is now changing to be more dynamic and challenging, so Ian had a great opportunity to develop his own style of inspirational management.

He was also supported by the company's vision: 'to make people feel like jewels'. This translated into valuing people, showing appreciation and nurturing talent by giving responsibility and accountability. It was a great backdrop for Ian's teambuilding work.



Ian's beliefs are definitely those of an inspirational manager, but the previous business style hadn't given him the space or opportunity to develop his skills with people. Working together in a coaching relationship, Ian and I explored the challenges ahead, the right people for the team and the best way to go about developing them. Once he had pulled together the people he wanted, we all spent a day together understanding what the new company values meant to them as a team. We had a great time and lots of fun:

- ▶ learning more about each other
- ▶ understanding strengths and development areas
- ▶ learning a bit about life outside work
- ▶ setting some clear ground rules for team behaviour.

Then began the task of holding to the ground rules and delivering on expectations. Our coaching discussions supported Ian in defining his management style and navigating tough times. When you are working in a changing culture, support levels for the new ways aren't always high, so it really helps to know that someone else believes in the same things.

Ian followed his heart, held to his beliefs and began the task of balancing support with dynamic challenge. His aim was for a team that confronted inappropriate behaviour – he knew that if they felt safe enough to do that, they would also feel free to be creative. He realised that the first step was to let them know how much they were appreciated. 'If you give positive feedback often enough, then constructive criticism is much easier to hear.' True enough, he now has people who will listen to feedback without being defensive. It doesn't mean that they are perfect or that they are working to their optimum yet, but it does mean there's a better chance of learning and high performance.

“If you give positive feedback often enough, then constructive criticism is much easier to hear.”

Managing your manager

Your own manager will have an influence on what you can do with your own team, so building a strong relationship with them will free you up to be as inspirational as you wish.

All the managers I spoke to had equally inspirational managers above them, which makes their task significantly easier since their reporting relationship matches those key beliefs. Tesh Kataria, at Tower Homes, is fortunate to be managed by Stacey Mitchell, who believes that it is really important to know her people well. Her two direct reports are totally different and she has to be able to hold them both to task. She sets out to understand their motivation, be clear what makes them tick and know enough about their personal lives to be able to take it into account when necessary so she:

- ▶ understands how energetic Tesh is, but is able to step back to look at things objectively
- ▶ doesn't want to demoralise him, so seeks a balance of support and challenge and accepts that there will be mistakes
- ▶ knows that he is quite happy to hear critical feedback
- ▶ ensures that they talk on a regular basis to catch up with what he is doing and offer help.

Stacey's other direct report is more like she is herself – sensitive and self-critical – so giving her tough feedback is a much more delicate job. By using her knowledge and understanding of them both, she can do it in the best way possible to ensure top-quality results all round.

If you don't work for an inspirational manager, then you have a more difficult task on your hands. The key factor is not to let it change how you want to work yourself. You have direct experience of not being cared for and developed in the way that you believe to be your due, so let it increase your commitment to your own people. If the lack of inspiration is a problem for you, look for a mentor in the workplace. There are sure to be other inspirational managers you can relate to and use as a role model.

“Become an inspiration to your own manager.”

Sticking to your guns may also mean that you become an inspiration to your own manager. A lot of people only have role models of autocratic or laissez-faire managers to go on, so if you have a great team and deliver strong results, they will inevitably notice what you are doing. Always hold to your beliefs:

- ▶ trust to strengths
- ▶ build the relationship
- ▶ tell the truth
- ▶ be consistent.

You will soon find that change begins to happen in front of your eyes.

Summary

- ▶ Inspirational managers have key beliefs that centre on people and their development.
- ▶ They believe that everyone has their own particular strengths and given the necessary support, they can develop them.
- ▶ By building strong relationships, they create a working environment where people can come into their own.
- ▶ Telling the truth at all times means that trust levels are high in the team and everyone knows where they stand.
- ▶ Consistent behaviour means people always know where they stand.
- ▶ There are significant pay-offs for working in this way that will be appreciated and rewarded by the organisation and people alike.
- ▶ If you can find a way to work with the organisation's values, it makes life easier. If it is not possible, you have to decide if there is space for you to work in the way you want to.
- ▶ If your own manager doesn't have the same key beliefs, don't give up. Instead, see if you can inspire them, too.

Action plan

Today

- ▶ Consider how you manage at the moment and see if you can identify the beliefs that underpin your style.
- ▶ As you do this, think about whether or not they are beliefs that make the most of your people.



Next week

- ▶ Take one inspirational manager belief a day and work to it to see what difference it makes to your team.
- ▶ Make notes about how this changes your impact.
- ▶ Ask for feedback from your team members at the end of the week to explore any differences that they experienced.

Next month

- ▶ Talk to your colleagues and find the people who are keen to develop their own inspirational beliefs. Share your thinking with them and find ways in which you can support each other.
- ▶ Get feedback on specific issues from supportive colleagues who will be with you in meetings. Take five minutes at the end of each meeting to share some feedback.
- ▶ Take the feedback to heart and act on it over the next couple of days and see what effect it has.
- ▶ Once you are clear on your beliefs as an inspirational manager, talk about them to others, including your own direct line manager. Doing this will help you stick to your beliefs in the long term.

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