

The 5% Formula

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Father's Day reminded me of the many lessons I learned from my dad, and my decision to dedicate my first book (*The Navigator's Compass*) to him was easy. Beyond being a terrific father, he was the most decent, patient and selfless person I have ever met. Although I've been fortunate to have many leadership heroes over my career, he remains at the top of the list. Everything he did was about allowing his moral compass to guide him. He was a Master Navigator for sure. He was also a deeply religious and principled man. He didn't say much but when he did, it was always kind, respectful and meaningful.

Earlier in my career and shortly after my second promotion to the leadership ranks, I remember asking my dad about his leadership success formula. He had enjoyed a distinguished 40 year career in law enforcement and had retired as one of the most senior leaders of his agency. He was a highly successful and well respected professional by all accounts. His answer to my success formula inquiry was quite powerful in its simplicity. He was quick to say that a lot of things had influenced his success over the years but one thing that stood out for him was his 5% Formula.

His 5% Formula, he went on to tell me, was about always giving 5% more than people expect. He had worked with a lot of people over 40 years and had

certainly observed a wide range of successful people over that timeframe. He said he was lucky to learn this early in his career and as a result, made this one of his important guideposts along the way. He went on to say that it had been his observation over much of his career that very few people actually give 100% of themselves to their work. In fact, he didn't think that giving 100% was realistic. "The best you can do is exceed their expectations" he said. Sometimes that takes 80% of your effort and other times it takes 90% of your effort but it always takes 5% more than they expect.

Although my dad's success formula was quite relevant when I first heard it, I think it's even more relevant today. With very few exceptions, every leader I know is faced with the daily challenge of building or maintaining high levels of employee engagement. To be sure, engagement is the engine that drives high performance and your leadership is the fuel that makes engagement possible.

Giving 5% more than is expected in any area of your life, be it work or family or friends goes a long way in creating a higher level of success and satisfaction. It also represents a powerful example for your team as you lead them through the rapidly changing landscape of today's workplace.

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Five More Things You Can Do Now:

1. Engage your team in a conversation about what the 5% Formula means to them. Consider asking them to define what role the 5% Formula plays in team success and job satisfaction.
2. Initiate a conversation with your leadership peer group to assess how the 5% Formula applies to you as a leadership team. Consider asking each peer to identify one thing they can do to demonstrate the 5% Formula in any part of their role to help foster greater personal accountability and ownership among team members.
3. Take the time to assess the scope of your leadership influence and what impact it has on team engagement and satisfaction. Explore ways in which the 5% Formula can be incorporated into your leadership strategy to help expand your leadership influence and impact.
4. Solicit input from your team about the workplace behaviors that embody the 5% Formula. Ask them to identify daily or weekly opportunities within your department or broader organization where they can apply the 5% Formula.
5. Initiate a conversation with other leadership team members about the impact that the 5% Formula has on customer satisfaction, employee morale and financial performance. Commit to including an exploration of the 5% Formula and its link to these factors over an extended period of time. Even 30 minutes per week over 3 to 6 months could have a significant impact on your capacity to make the 5% Formula part of your culture.

About David A. O'Brien:

David is President of Connecticut based WorkChoice Solutions, a trusted provider of leadership and team effectiveness training, coaching and consulting services founded in 2000. He works with a wide range of corporate, nonprofit and public sector clients to help bring about sustainable improvements in organizational effectiveness. His first book, *The Navigator's Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* is available on-line and in bookstores nationwide. His second book, *The Navigator's Compass 101 Steps Toward Leadership Excellence* will have a nationwide release on August 4, 2015. To learn more about the scope of David's work in helping leaders and teams to be more effective or to arrange for David to speak at your next conference or other special event, please visit WorkChoice Solutions on line at: www.workchoicesolutions.com or call him directly at 860.242.1070.

