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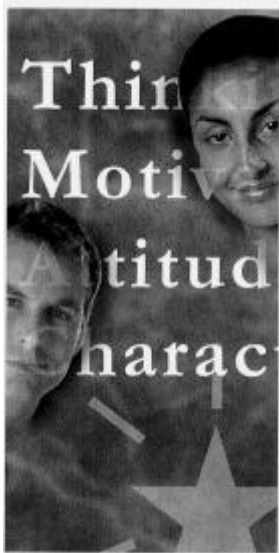
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Editorial: Are you a prime mover?

Kathryn Schroeter

If then everything that is in motion is moved by something, and the (prime) mover is moved but not by anything else, it must be moved by itself.¹

-Aristotle



What traits make leaders successful? Can these traits be developed? According to Dr Ed Locke's book, *The Prime Movers-Traits of the Great Wealth Creators*, the right mix of traits can result in an individual with a level of confidence and competence that leads to success.² Prime movers are efficacious people at work, people who use their own judgment and who-through tenacity, passion, and ability-succeed against all odds.³

But what does creating wealth have to do with health care? For health care to survive as a service provided for individuals, it must be able to exist in a system that is free to allow growth, change, profit, and success. Therefore, there must be leaders at the helm who can provide the guidance, vision, and support that will direct health care into the future.

TRAITS OF PRIME MOVERS

While Dr Locke does not argue that his list of traits and characteristics of prime movers is exhaustive, he does believe that the list contains the fundamentals. He also considers these traits necessary for wealth creation regardless of person, time, or place. He groups the traits into four categories:

- thinking,
- motivation,
- attitude toward employees and staff members, and
- character.⁴

Though the traits may vary with each individual, successful individuals have elements of each trait within them. Each trait also may be demonstrated differently by each individual. If you are to be a prime mover, you will need to develop these characteristics and incorporate them into your management and leadership strategies.

THINKING. Thinking, first of all, is a volitional process. This means that you must make an active choice to think or not to think. This is a leader's first choice, for if you choose not to think at all, you have, in essence, chosen not to exist in reality.

Thinkers have an independent vision, an active mind, and confidence and competence.

The great creators-the thinkers, the artists, the scientists, the inventors-stood alone against the men of their time . . . every great invention was denounced. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to agree with others. But the creator is the man who disagrees. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to swim with the current. But the creator is the man who goes against the current . . . the creator is the man who stands alone.⁵

Those who think have independent vision, for without the guidance of ideas and vision, action becomes just a mindless motion without direction, purpose, or value. What, then, is "vision"? According to Dr Locke, it fundamentally is foresight-not foresight focused around what you want to do, but rather around what will work in the future.⁶ Prime movers must have independent vision and, if possible, even be able to see around corners.

Prime movers need to communicate their vision to their work teams or staff members to ensure a sense of common purpose and also to excite their team members.⁷ Communication is a critical skill for a leader to develop.

Keeping your mind active is one of the first steps you can take toward becoming a prime mover. If your mind is to be active, you cannot sit at home and wait for knowledge to come knocking-you must go out and seek knowledge. According to author Ayn Rand,

A process of thought is not automatic nor instinctive, nor involuntary, nor infallible. Man has to initiate it, sustain it, and bear responsibility for its results.⁸

MOTIVATION. According to Dr Locke, motivation, or the drive to action, is not an uncaused primary. Rather, it is caused from within. The inner fire moves people to action and is a conglomeration of ambition; high goals and standards; stamina, effort and energy; and tenacity.⁹

Prime movers differ from others in the scope and intensity of their ambitions, in that they love their work, and in the actions they take to succeed. A key idea to note here is that these people love their work. Without this aspect of motivation, it is difficult to move toward success. If you do not love your work, you may want to reconsider your life choices.

ATTITUDE TOWARD STAFF MEMBERS. Prime movers are drawn to the ability they see in others. Prime movers may not have specialized knowledge about every aspect of the business they are in, but they recognize the need to hire specialists to work for them.

Prime movers groom these specialized staff members so their talents may be fully developed. The staff members are expected to learn a lot and also to succeed. To that end, prime movers will support staff members and foster their professional development. Prime movers do not worry that new staff members will gain too much knowledge and become a threat-rather, prime movers see the overall effect that excellent staff members will have on the organization. They encourage staff members to disagree with them so that change and growth can occur. Prime movers are open to such challenges and constructive confrontation by staff members.

In addition, prime movers believe that staff members' efforts should be rewarded. Prime movers value achievement, and to not reward an individual appropriately for his or her efforts would be an egregious error in judgment on the part of the leader.

CHARACTER. Virtue is integral to the character of a prime mover. Aristotle espoused an ethic of virtue that argues that the intent of the individual is what drives his or her behavior and actions. The character of a prime mover also includes

- rationality-being reality-based in thoughts and actions,
- independence-being able to make decisions and take responsibility for them,
- productivity-being able to put forth work and yield a product,
- honesty-being true to facts of reality,
- integrity-being able to walk your talk, and
- justice-being able to reward merit and avoid those who are unjust.¹⁰

ARE YOU A PRIME MOVER?

A prime mover is one who not only can be successful in the business in which he or she is involved, but who also can treat others honestly and fairly in an ethical environment. The traits of a prime mover can be identified and developed, but it takes effort.

These are a few of the overall traits that one can choose to develop. Other leadership traits of a prime mover include competitiveness, charisma, good communication skills, frugality, and patience.

A prime mover's management strategies are to

- hire extremely capable people;
- urge them to take on tremendous goals;
- give them full responsibility-within the bounds of their ability, ethics, and the organization's strategy and vision-to achieve goals; and
- reward them fairly for their performance.¹¹

Interviewers often ask potential employees, "Where do you see yourself five years from now?" Do you have the ability to see the whole and the parts simultaneously? Do you have a desire to constantly make improvements? Do you have an active focus on what you are doing, as well as a vision for your future? Do you want to be a prime mover? The choice, obviously, is yours.

Footnote

1. Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, vol 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984) 428.
2. E A Locke, *The Prime Movers: Traits of the Great Wealth Creators* (New York: AMACOM, 2000).
3. *Ibid*, 17.
4. *Ibid*, 16.
5. A Rand, *The Fountainhead* (New York: Signet, 1993) 680-682.
6. Locke, *The Prime Movers: Traits of the Great Wealth Creators*, 47.
7. *Ibid*, 28.

8. A Rand, Atlas Shrugged (New York: Signet, 1992) 54.
9. Locke, The Prime Movers: Traits of the Great Wealth Creators, 85.
10. Ibid, 181.
11. Ibid, 190.