

FOCUSED FEATURES

CREATING THE RIPPLE EFFECT IN LEADERSHIP

Native Allentonian, now New York- and Cape Town-based screenwriter, Barry Berman made his way to South Africa for a vacation that turned into a twist in his vocation.

During Berman's visit, he was afforded the opportunity to see areas and meet people few tourists would care to include on their itinerary – people living in the most severely impoverished and dangerous conditions. Moved by what he saw, Berman was drawn to take action.

Fifteen months after Berman – who wrote “Benny & Joon,” “Waterproof” and “The Adventures of Pinocchio” – arrived in Cape Town, he founded Infinity Culinary Training, a 12-week program that results in meaningful employment for the most severely impoverished South African youth.

Four years and 113 graduates later, the accomplishments are astounding. ICT's teaching kitchen is now located in a well-known restaurant in Cape Town – and 71% of the students remain gainfully employed, several students have started their own businesses, and four graduates have joined ICT's faculty.



The ripple effects from Barry's acts of leadership continue to inspire students, colleagues, friends, family, and strangers on two continents. Every person touched by this story should be asking themselves “What can I do to inspire leadership in others, and how can I create the ripple effect?”

Inspiring, Guiding, Growing

Many business leaders say they spend greater than 50% of their time “managing people,” and are drained by the experience. If we look at the experience from a different perspective and say **leadership is about inspiring, motivating, guiding and growing**, instead of just managing people, the outcome is bound to produce a greater benefit all the way around.

When people are inspired, they perform at higher levels. Conversely, if you, as the organization's leader stay too focused on the immediate demands of the business and miss opportunities to inspire the people you lead, you will quickly become a de-motivating distraction in your company. Unfortunately, when people are de-motivated, they become disengaged, work product suffers, and bottom line performance starts to erode. And, that is a ripple effect you don't want to create.



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Leave Your Comfort Zone

If your current method of growing leaders is not working, try something new and stretch out of *your* comfort zone.

- First, make sure you have the right people on your leadership team.
- Next, talk about the expectations you have of each other and how to exceed those expectations. And, ask questions like “What are you learning about yourself as a leader?” “How would you define your leadership style?” and “How do you help the people you lead, step up?”
- Then, verbally acknowledge how *you* value their contributions to the company. Be specific and site examples of things they’ve done to contribute. Continuous and consistent interactions of this type will start the ripple effect spreading throughout the organization.

Regardless, of a person’s natural inclination to lead, most people need inspiration to get them going and keep them going until they reach a tipping point. When they become the inspiration for others, the need for external inspiration lessens.

What Is Your Motivation?

During a recent interview, Barry Berman was asked what inspired him to start Infinity Culinary Training.

He responded by saying “Look, it’s not some big, fancy answer. One thing got me started and another kept me going. I had an interesting curiosity about something I did not know how to do, and had never done before. Not knowing how to do something, made it intriguing for me. Seeing how important the results were to everybody, kept me going. In the world of Hollywood, you work 7 years before things may or may not happen. With ICT, miraculous things were happening in 12 weeks.”



Everybody’s **“rocket fuel”** is different. “Not knowing how to do something” was the motivation for Berman. What will it take for you to grow leadership in your organization, watch the flowers bloom, and be energized by the outcome?

Quick! Find a stone and throw it in the water. . .



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KEY NOTES:

- Invest your time inspiring, motivating, guiding and growing leaders, instead of just managing people. The experience and outcome will be very rewarding.
- Be the first to throw your stone in the water and start the ripple effect throughout your organization. Everyone watches and learns from leaders. Be assured your leadership team watches and observes how you lead.