Commitment to Other's Success

By Charles E. Smith Ph.D

'"In the middle ages, alchemists sought the "Philosopher's Stone"'" which could turn base metal into gold. Visions of impossible wealth and power and the very magic of the idea captured hearts and minds.

'"The base metal in modern life is everything that suppresses energy, cooperation and willingness'" to reach beyond the predictable. For a long time I've sought simple ways to transform this base metal. There have been few answers. Success has been mostly in events and often temporary. Training programs, reorganizations, rewards and new direction have usually made a short lived difference. The source of the difference seemed to go away. Still, the sometime magic of new possibility keeps me the playing the game. The experience reminds me of playing slot machines in Las Vegas. Every once in a while, I pull the lever, people commit to each others success and, in that moment, there is an explosion of energy, attraction and intention regarding whatever they care about and were resigned about in the first place.

'"There are many corporate examples of "commitment to the success of others."'" The most common is found when people have mentors. The evidence is that people who are mentored by others can get ahead faster. Most of the time, though, people in companies have not been committed to each others' success. It's just not something they are rewarded for. It's not that people are against each other, although that does happen. They are just not "for" one another. There are many reasons for this. Most of these are natural human reactions to the design of hierarchical and functional organizations. Some may come from human nature. It is too easy to condemn the organizations and the people. Rather than condemn, I suggest that the act of committing to others' success makes resistance disappear for as long as you sustain and renew the commitment.

'"People in any situation are either "for" one another or they are "not."'" In any moment, while this may not be fully in awareness, it's absolute. When asked if someone else is for

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them, the answer is always, "yes, they are for me" or "no, they are not for me" or they might say, "I can't tell." The latter, as a practical matter has the same effect as the other person not being for you. I suggest that this condition is the context of the relationship. This context is decisive. It shapes what's possible and what happens. It promotes energy, cooperation and trust or it suppress it. Ultimately, it determines the quality of performance.

"'Kurt Lewin said that if you want to understand something, try to change it.'" For almost 30 years, I have used my commitment to the success of the person who hires me as my guiding light. Even when they stop hiring me, I have remained committed to their success and their life. I've never committed to organizations but to the people leading them. One time, I found that I had withdrawn my commitment to a client's success. It was an unsettling and unpleasant experience. It wasn't a conscious choice to de-commit. I first noticed that I was behaving in less enthusiastic ways and in retrospect I saw that I had withdrawn my commitment.

"'Committing to Someone's Success is a Pledge that:'"

"'I am for you.'"

I will not let what comes between us stay unresolved.

I will make sure we are living into the same future at the highest level.

I will not undermine you.

I will not lie to you or withhold what you need to know to improve.

I will be willing to have upset between us.

I will try to resolve differences and to speak out for the resolution of differences privately and in public. I will not avoid public conversation of differences to maintain control.

I will speak out for the value and validity of commitment to each other's success.

'"Commitment to the Success of Others is always Personal"'

'"It is always between two people."' When more parties enter the picture the relationship between the first becomes less direct and personal. This explains why relationships in big organizations become so alienated. The difficulty in sustaining teams has much to do with failed expectations that a group can be personal ever time. A sustainable group is grounded in one to one personal relationships. Otherwise, it is only held together by control by someone everyone is dependent on.

'"Business or technical process is essentially conceptual in nature. Commitment to others' success is not." It's visceral. It's chemistry. It doesn't follow predictable rules. Commitment to others' success is a kaleidoscope that the mind tries to freeze in time with images and pictures and agreements. The experience of commitment to other's success keeps changing. In the present moment it is never the same.