

St. Joseph County Regional Nursing Home Learning Collaborative

Scoring the “Encourage the Heart Index”

From 186 to 210

You're doing great!! You're probably seeing a lot of your associates producing at high levels. Morale is high. People like working with you because you keep the work environment upbeat and positive, maybe even inspiring. They feel appreciated and are feeling good about the contributions they are making.

Encouraging the heart appears to be a highly developed part of your leadership repertoire. Your presence alone is an asset. If you're not already doing it, look around for someone who could use your mentoring abilities to be as affective as you are at encouraging others. Also if people aren't already taking the initiative to recognize and celebrate on their own, use your skills to provide structures and tools so they don't have to wait for you to get the ball rolling. Let them know it would be great, if they, too, would encourage and celebrate others achievements. Finally, always be on the lookout for new ways to encourage the heart, to avoid becoming repetitive, predictable, or boring.

From 126 to 185

You're doing pretty darn well. Although most of your associates are producing, you may feel that they could be giving more. You know there might be some grumbling, but people are generally happy working with you. You may have the haunting feeling from time to time that there is something more you could be doing to motivate and encourage people, but you don't know exactly what it is,

You clearly recognize that encouraging the heart is important, yet you may feel reluctant to commit completely to this practice daily. To take the next step, ask yourself what's holding you back from encouraging more. For example, some people put limits on how much they encourage others because they feel leaders need to keep a certain emotional distance from the others. You discover as you proceed, though, that you can keep a certain distance even as you are acknowledging individuals and celebrating your team's accomplishments.

Perhaps you're not the cheerleader type, and you're turned off by the idea of making too much of what people are getting paid to do: you feel that they shouldn't be expecting any special treatment. Even if there is some truth in this, the fact remains that we are social animals and most of us respond well when we are acknowledged for our efforts.

Whatever the reason you're holding back, take an honest look at it and weigh the reason against what you gain by encouraging the heart. You might find that your uneasiness about this process fades away as you experience greater success and ease with this aspect of leadership.

From 65 to 125

People are probably not working to their highest levels, and there's a part of you that is well aware of this fact. You might even get the feeling that the only time everyone is working to their capacity is when they think you are watching them. Not to worry, though; there are plenty of opportunities to encourage the heart that you can put in practice.

You may feel that there is value in encouraging the heart, but you're missing the opportunities to put the practice into motion. Start paying attention to the achievements of the people around you that you feel are worthy of acknowledgment or celebration: a person going the extra mile on a project on time, a team within your organization completing a challenging task, or a person just doing something thoughtful that makes your job easier.

If you feel reluctant to do any of this, see if you can identify what's holding you back. Think about things you can do to make your workplace more fun and inspiring to people who work there—it will be more fun and inspiring for you, too. Even a laugh or two can enhance productivity and worker satisfaction.

From 21 to 65

Our guess is that your score isn't this low. If is, we hope that you'll get busy immediately putting some of the ideas you've heard into practice. If your score is this low, it's a pretty good bet that there is a fair amount of discontent in the ranks, or you're really tough on yourself. The good news is that you are in a position to make immense changes that not only increase productivity but make your job a heck of a lot easier.

Research has shown that most people produce more in an environment where they get positive feedback and that productivity diminishes where there is little or no feedback or where they hear from their leaders only if something is wrong. Since it's your job as a leader to make sure that people are earning their keep, you are probably not earning yours unless you are encouraging the heart.

Make a commitment today to find something in your workplace to celebrate. Say thank you to someone who enables you to be little more effective—and tell them so! Perhaps you don't appreciate how important encouraging the heart is for maintaining the vitality of your team. Or maybe you're just overlooking the opportunities to celebrate and give recognition. See if there is someone in your organization you can team up with to help encourage others. Find a role model and spend some time with that person as you learn from her how she encourages the heart.

True leadership has its own intrinsic rewards; they come as you learn to work with others not through intimidation and control but through cooperation and recognition.