

Avoiding the tragedies of leadership

By DR. LARRY COLE

ALL OF US have the potential to be better tomorrow than what we are today, but that transformation doesn't happen automatically.

Consequently, there are categorical tragedies.

One tragedy is those who **DON'T REALIZE** the potential waiting in their bodies to be developed. Formal education systems prepare us to make a living, but don't teach the life skills needed to live.

A second tragedy is those who recognize the potential but **NEGLECT** it. An argument could be made that the second is worse than the first.

Fortunately, there is another category of people who recognize their potential, **MAXIMIZE** it and commit to becoming the best version of themselves.

These three categories are depicted below.



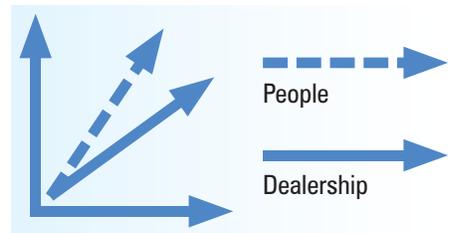
Of these three categories, your high performers will be those on the right. Just for a moment, imagine what your dealership would be like if every one of your employees fit into the category to the right – Maximize Me. Your dealership would be synergistic.

Let's consider another fact. Study the following continuum.



Which employee is going to be the most productive? You're correct – the one on the right. We have two positions on the right and they are related. Employees who experience **MEANINGFUL** work are more likely to be those who **MAXIMIZE** themselves.

Let's consider another fact. Study the following figure.



Certainly, you would like your dealership's success to be a straight-line function. Have you thought about the fact your dealership's growth is predicated on the growth of your people? Yes, dealerships change as their people change.

Moving people to the right

Before starting this journey, you need to know that I'm taking you down a road that is less traveled, but is pivotal to a high performing dealership.

- **University.** It is paramount that you consider your dealership as a university or a center of learning in which every employee has the daily opportunity to practice the two sets of skills that drive their success: technical and interpersonal. This, however, puts pressure on your managers who are the faculty since they have to maximize their potential in order to help others do the same.

- **Vision.** Over the years I've asked hundreds of people, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The typical reaction is a laugh followed by "Good question."

All living plants and animals are hard-wired to be going toward something to complete their life cycle. The vision of nonthinking plants and animals is defined by their DNA and they are simply being the best version of themselves as allowed by their genetic makeup and available resources.

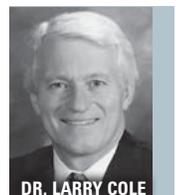
Humans, on the other hand, are equipped with a very powerful psychological tool – the ability to think. This tool gives most of us the capability to define our personal vision to guide the direction of our lives and careers to maximize the opportunities that life brings.

As a center of learning, you want your employees to have vision of where their career is taking them. The vision provides direction and sets up the establishment of career goals. Of course, you want their vision and career goals to support the dealership's vision.

- **Purpose.** Another perplexing question is, "Why are you here on earth other than to consume resources and take up space?" Unfortunately, most people don't know the answer to that question either. Not knowing is a tragedy since the psychological bottom line is that knowing the "why" in our lives is the fuel to achieve high performance. Living/working your purpose in life makes living a lot more enjoyable.

Just imagine the synergy that would be created if your employees' purpose for working at your dealership is aligned with the "why" your dealership exists.

- **Values.** Too many of us take our values for granted. The critical role values play



DR. LARRY COLE

is a lead trainer for the Western Equipment Dealers Association's Dealer Institute.

Just imagine the synergy that would be created if your employees' purpose for working at your dealership is aligned with the "why" your dealership exists.

is to keep our life on track as we 1) live our purpose and 2) strive to achieve our vision.

In reality, we are living a combination of many values every second of every day and we tell others about our values by our interactions with them. If I told you that employee commitment to your dealership is increased by simply defining their values, what would you do? That's exactly what happens. **You can use the values I've listed under the Personal Values Exercise and select the top 10 that are important for your success.** Of course, you could add values that are not on the list. Something else to consider is asking others to identify what they think are your top 10.

In closing

My guess is that you want a high-performing dealership. By virtue of this article, I'm asking senior leaders to be a positive role model and write your vision, mission and complete the Personal Values Exercise. Share this information throughout the dealership and ask other members of the management structure to do the same. Yes, completing this exercise would be beneficial for employees.

Of course, the next step is to put this valuable content to work. I completed this exercise over 30 years ago and put it to work every day as I complete the morning review along with the description of the person I want to be today. In your dealership, you want this content to guide your employees' work as it has guided mine the last three decades. **WED**

LARRY COLE, Ph.D., is a lead trainer for and consultant to the Western Equipment Dealers Association's Dealer Institute. He provides onsite training and public courses to improve business leadership effectiveness and internal and external customer service. Please send questions and/or comments to Larry at teammax100@gmail.com.

PERSONAL VALUES EXERCISE

1. Achievement / Success
2. Accountability
3. Autonomy
4. Beauty
5. Challenge
6. Communication
7. Competence
8. Competition
9. Courage
10. Creativity
11. Curiosity
12. Decisiveness
13. Dependability
14. Discipline
15. Diversity
16. Effectiveness
17. Empathy
18. Empowerment
19. Equality
20. Family
21. Flexibility
22. Friendship
23. Freedom
24. Growth / Continuous Improvement
25. Happiness
26. Harmony
27. Health
28. Honesty / Integrity
29. Humility
30. Humor
31. Independence
32. Innovation
33. Intelligence
34. Love / Affection
35. Loyalty
36. Open-mindedness
37. Optimism
38. Patience
39. Positive Workplace
40. Power
41. Productivity
42. Prosperity / Wealth
43. Quality
44. Recognition
45. Respect
46. Risk-taking
47. Security
48. Service
49. Simplicity
50. Spirituality / Faith
51. Strength
52. Teamwork
53. Trust
54. Truth
55. Variety
56. Wisdom