

Chapter 8: *WIIFM—What’s In It For Me?*

“In business you get what you want by giving other people what they want.”

Alice MacDougall¹

It should be commonly understood that each of us makes decisions based on what’s in our own best interest. This is the main motivator for our actions. Most individuals work because they need to make a living. Some individuals are lucky enough to work in professions that they enjoy and so they work for the love of it. Others find it an often unattractive necessity. These are the individuals that require major motivation to perform well. Although, there are some who perform well without external motivation because it is in their nature to do so; however, this is not so for most employees. Therefore, it becomes necessary to discover ways to motivate employees that are not cost prohibitive.

The mistake often made by many executives is to assume that money is the greatest motivator. However, there are a number of research studies that have proven otherwise and suggest other types of things that truly motivate individuals. These things are also found to be effective within organizations and are mainly internal motivators like recognition, autonomy, work fulfillment, etc. The bottom line is that the motivators for most individuals involve the same elements that relate to our humanness.

As humans, we like to be respected, appreciated, assisted, cared for, and given freedom to be who we are. These needs and desires do not go away when individuals become members of an organization. The belief that individuals can leave this outside the company’s doors is absurd, yet it is commonly expected and attempted. This expectation is where many executives go wrong. You cannot ask people to stop being human. You cannot ask them to put aside who they are to become a robotic employee eight hours a day, five days a week, how ever many days a year, and then expect fantastic results. If this were easily achieved, there wouldn’t be so many employee challenges in the workplace.

In my work as an Organization Development Consultant, every single client that brought me in to assess their employee-related organizational challenges shared a common thread—they had ignored the humanness factor. This was at the crux of each one of their challenges. Yes, the problems manifested themselves in different ways, but at the core were the employees’ sense of feeling disrespected, unappreciated, and uncared for.

In these organizations, a major problem that occurred was miscommunication. Executives didn’t really intend to disrespect employees and be unappreciative, but communications and actions can often be misinterpreted by employees, thus causing ill will. Employees choose how to interpret management’s communications. If employees believe that management does not have their best interest at heart, they will interpret management’s communications based on that premise. However, when management begins with the premise that employees are to be respected in the same manner that top executives are, they become more thoughtful of their communication and actions; and employees will perceive the communications accordingly. This is why this new consciousness model begins with the philosophical approach of viewing each

¹ *Quote Source: <http://www.myquotebox.com/Business-quotes.html>*

employee as being just as important as the executive. This mind set is necessary because it helps to guide each communication and each action, and in this context, even subconscious communications occur in a mode of respect. Also, when employees generally believe that management has their best interests at heart, they often give them the benefit of the doubt even if communications are not totally positive.

CREATE A CULTURE OF PARTNERSHIP

And why not respect employees' needs and desires as much as your own or other top executives'? What does it take away from executives to do this? It costs nothing, but it does make your employees feel like partners in business with a sense of responsibility to do their part. A partnership approach can maximize organizational performance. The key to creating a culture of partnership began with the sharing of the company vision. It included having employees participate in the brainstorming of strategies. It also included creating a blueprint for them to succeed in achieving their departmental targets and the company's goals. However, this partnership is revealed best through the traditionally termed 'performance appraisal or review' process. This represents a grand opportunity to create a culture of partnership. Although, what is advocated in this model is a far cry from the traditional performance review process.

What's wrong with the traditional performance appraisal process?

Traditional review processes do not promote a culture of partnership. It appears that too often supervisors or managers view the performance appraisal process as a time for punishment, criticism, or judgment. While the process does involve evaluation of sorts, the focus should always be on the most effective way to achieve the objective—the objective being performance improvement or excellence in the workplace. If the objective is performance improvement, then every effort should be made to do just that—improve performance.

The problem with many of the performance review instruments being used in companies is the content itself from two perspectives: 1. The relevance of the objectives or attributes listed on the instrument; and 2. The fact that the terms within the objectives or the attributes themselves are not defined. In my consulting practice, I have seen performance appraisal instruments or forms with objectives and attributes that are not at all relevant to the employee's specific job function. This is often because off-the-shelf performance appraisals are being used.

If you were to use a traditional performance appraisal instrument, although not advocated in this model, the objectives listed within a performance appraisal instrument should always be relevant and reflective of the employee's job function. Otherwise, the evaluation process defeats the purpose for which it was intended. Also, terms should be specifically defined. It is unfair and ineffective to evaluate individuals using generic terms whose meanings are left up to the individuals' imaginations.

For instance, many performance appraisal forms include a measure of 'positive attitude.' What exactly is 'a positive attitude?' Unless it is specifically defined and is measurable, the interpretation of 'a positive attitude' is subjective. If you wanted to evaluate 'a positive attitude' in a traditional sense, the term would need to be defined. For example: "demonstrates positive attitude by showing initiative, being punctual 90% of the time, etc."

In addition to the use of inappropriate instruments, the most counterproductive aspect of this process is the way many companies handle the process itself. Many employees view the performance appraisal process with dread. They sometimes act as if they are ‘walking down the plank.’ This is not because they feel they have performed badly. Rather, this dread is due to a sense of uncertainty; because in many instances, employees don’t know what to expect. This should never be the case. In some companies, the entire evaluation process has become perfunctory, which then begs the question, why bother? In a perfect world, I would structure the entire process differently in every company.

This new consciousness business model has no room for the traditional performance review systems. Instead of having the manager use the approach of being the ‘big bad judge,’ employees should rate themselves, but not in the way that it is done now where employees are asked, “How do you think you did?” Instead, it is about a philosophy of employees setting work objectives/targets that they feel they need to work toward, in conjunction with managers, and they (employees) themselves discussing their progress during the evaluation process. So instead of being ‘the big bad judge,’ the manager’s approach is one of partnership: “I am here to support you, to coach you, and to help you achieve your goals.” This approach would fit within the wider philosophical approach inherent within the organization and is exactly what is advocated in this new consciousness model.

THE PARTNERSHIP

In a partnership, ‘there is something in it for everybody.’ In a partnership, everyone is accountable for bottom-line results. In a partnership, each partner is considered to be important. The attitude of being in a partnership during the review process is critical to this new consciousness business model.

In this approach, the performance review process has a different function. However, it serves the same purpose, which is to review performance and motivate employees to achieve organizational goals. Any type of performance review must be in alignment with this model’s philosophy. It must reflect the attitude of partnership; therefore, it must begin with a new label. Here are some options to be considered:

Partnership Review Session

Goals Review Session

Employee Development Session

WIIFM Session (What’s In It For Me Session)

These are possible terms that can be adopted or any other that reflects the sense of equality of employees or the sense of ‘support for employees’ efforts.’ If management has committed to this philosophical approach (and they must for its success), then it should be easy to naturally convey the attitude “I am here to support you and help you achieve your goals;” because, this is the WIIFM (*pronounced wiff-um*) Session. Remember the premise—‘in order for me (Mr. Executive) to achieve my goals, you have to be able to achieve yours’? This is the session that communicates self-leadership and creates the foundation for employees to reach their goals. This session can be conducted by Human Resources or the department’s supervisor;

it doesn't matter because all executives are required to buy into the philosophy of employing this new consciousness business model.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

It is advocated that a 'Statement of Responsibility' be created that each employee will have to sign upon employment with your company. This statement is a two-way street. It reflects the philosophy of partnership and is a commitment that each of the partners agrees to make with the other. The company agrees to honor the employee's goals, do all in its power to assist them, and remunerate them for their work performance; the employee agrees to be prompt, accountable, work the agreed upon hours, adhere to the company's policies, and deliver on the work objectives created in partnership with the company. This document should have both the employee's signature and the company representative's signature. While this is an over-arching document outlining the general responsibility of each partner, there are two specific documents that arise out of this: The Individual Work Plan and the Individual Development Plan (*to be discussed*).

The above-mentioned are the two agreements that will help each of the partners to reach their individual goals. The Executive's document of agreement between the company and the employee is the Individual Work Plan developed in partnership with the employee. The employee's document of agreement between the employee and the company is their own goal achievement plan, the Individual Development Plan, developed with the human resources development practitioner upon arrival at the company (or at whichever point this model is being implemented).

The WIIFM Session has three essential components: Individual Development Plan review, Individual Work Plan Review, and Organizational Resolutions.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

An Individual Development (ID) Plan must be developed in the first WIIFM session held with each employee. This session should discuss the company's philosophical approach, which should be one of partnership, and then discuss the employee's goals for him/herself. It is important to note that the HR practitioner or Supervisor facilitating this session should not be judgmental about any objective or goal put forward by the employee.

It is the employee's choice. If an employee has absolutely no ambition and is simply there to obtain a paycheck, that should also be acceptable; as long as she (*for ease of reference*) fulfills her agreement with the IW Plan it should be acceptable. There is still an opportunity to help motivate her to perform well. Remember, it is about being human—being treated with respect and being appreciated no matter their choices. However, know that all individuals will not be a good fit with this approach and so one should not hesitate to end the partnership if it becomes necessary. Nevertheless, even individuals with no ambition would prefer to enjoy what they do, as opposed to not enjoying it, and can still participate in a valuable manner.

The ID Plan should have the employee's goals, objectives/steps for getting there, as well as a development plan. (*See chart iii and chart iv for two sample plans.*)

SAMPLE*

NEW ENERGY ENTERPRISES (WHOLESALEERS)

JANE SMITH

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EMPLOYEE GOAL: Gain 5 years experience in General Accounting

OBJECTIVES

1. Gain 2 years experience in Accounts Receivables
2. Gain 2 years experience in Accounts Payables
3. Gain 1 year experience in Payroll

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

EDUCATION DESIRED: Complete Bachelor Degree by 2013

TRAINING REQUIRED: 1. Accounts Payables internal training
2. Payroll Training

EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION

CURRENT JOB FUNCTION: RECEIVABLES ASSISTANT

CURRENT SALARY: \$29,000 Annually

BENEFITS: Insurance Coverage, 2 weeks vacation, 3 days study leave annually

SALARY GOAL: \$32,000 BY 2011

SALARY GOAL STRATEGY

- Ø Surpass work objectives' targets
- Ø Be personally responsible for 3% reduction in cost of departmental targets.
- Ø Complete required training before job reclassification at 2012 year end.

Employee Signature

Date

Supervisor Signature

Date

**This sample ID plan is for illustration purposes only and may not represent ideal or true salaries or goals for this job function.*

SAMPLE*

NEW ENERGY ENTERPRISES (WHOLESALEERS)

SALLY JOHNSON

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EMPLOYEE GOAL: Increase salary annually

OBJECTIVES

1. Receive maximum increases annually
2. Achieve bonuses whenever available

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

EDUCATION DESIRED: None

TRAINING REQUIRED: Accounts Receivables Basics

EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION

CURRENT JOB FUNCTION: RECEIVABLES ASSISTANT

CURRENT SALARY: \$27,000 Annually

BENEFITS: Insurance Coverage, 2 weeks vacation

SALARY GOAL: Maximum Annual Increases

SALARY GOAL STRATEGY

- Achieve work objectives targets
- Complete required training before year end

Employee Signature

Date

Supervisor Signature

Date

**This sample ID plan is for illustration purposes only and may not represent ideal or true salaries or goals for this job function.*

Both of the sample plans reflect the same subsections, however the employees' choices are different. Jane Smith has set targets for herself of completing five years experience and obtaining a Bachelor's degree. Sally Johnson simply wants to obtain as high a salary as possible. (In the sample, the difference in starting salaries is a reflection of the education levels of the two employees upon entrance to the company; and the difference in benefits for Jane Smith is based on her negotiation for study time when the job was offered.)

Despite the difference in employee goals and ambition levels, there is no reason why both individuals cannot work optimally to achieve Individual Work Plan objectives and departmental targets. Although the temptation may be to do otherwise, both employees should be treated with the same respect and given the same opportunities to perform optimally because in this context, they will both help the company to reach its goal. Nevertheless, inherent in the employee ID Plan is the opportunity for the company to give back for exceptional work. i.e. Jane Smith desires the opportunity to work in other job functions while employed at the company as a part of her individual goal. In order to achieve this, the company will have to allow or create the opportunity for her to move into the other areas. Remember, this is a partnership: Facilitating work experience in other areas for Jane is the company's part of the agreement.

Also, there may come times when it is discovered that an employee is a square peg being forced into a round hole. Because of your commitment to the philosophy that employees' goals are just as important as the company's, this challenge has to be addressed. If there is an opportunity for the individual to move into another area more suited for that individual's skill set and interest, then by all means facilitate it. If it can easily be created, justified, and fitted within the budget, then create the opportunity. If there is absolutely no opportunity for that skill set, allow the individual to make the decision to remain with the company or not. However, communicate that if he or she stays, he or she must be able to fill his or her end of the agreement in terms of their IW Plan.

A word of warning: Do not assume that an individual who performs poorly in one area is a poor performer in every other area too! A case in point: While I was working for a previously referenced company, there were two individuals that were fired from one of the departments for poor performance. Both of these individuals approached me and asked if they could volunteer in my division. I was a bit wary at first because I assumed, like many executives would, that they were not competent workers. Nevertheless, I listened to their reasons for wanting to do this and agreed to allow them to volunteer in my office for a short period of time.

I gave these individuals several tasks to perform and they came back several days later with these tasks completed. Not only did they complete two of the tasks based on my specific requirements, but they also created a new system that would make it easier to perform the tasks in the future and made it easier to analyze the important components. I was totally blown away by this. I established who was responsible for what aspects, and after determining where I could find space in my budget, I created two new positions within my division based on their skill set. They become two of my top performing employees from that point forward. In fact, one of them rose to become my right hand person. This was a very valuable lesson for me that I hope can benefit other executives as well.

A final note: Individual Development Plans should be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis in terms of the employee's goals and objectives. The frequency of reviews and resetting of Individual Work Plan objectives should be based on the appropriateness and particular needs of the company.

INDIVIDUAL WORK PLAN REVIEW

Following the review of the Individual Development Plan during the WIIFM session, the Individual *Work* Plan should be reviewed and discussed. This aspect of the session should be conducted in conjunction with or by the department's supervisor, as he or she will be more familiar with the work function and targets. The purpose of the session is two-fold: 1. To assist the employee in reviewing his or her performance; and 2. To acknowledge, recognize and praise the employee's efforts. Given these objectives, the tone of this session is especially important. Once again, the role of the supervisor is the same—"How can I support you in your efforts?" A copy of the tracking report should be reviewed so that the employee can review her achievements.

In this session, the HR Practitioner/Supervisor is a facilitator in the true sense of the word. She is to provide support and input when asked, but is not to pass judgment on the employee's performance. When a role of support is used with an individual, that individual feels comfortable and free to assess himself/herself. This approach will yield far better results than if a supervisor was to stand in judgment of the employee's performance.

While true facilitation can be maximized with some training, remembering the philosophy of partnership and a 'your goals are important' approach will help a supervisor to easily serve as a facilitator. Nevertheless, an important tool that can be used in such a session involves a lot of parroting and/or paraphrasing: In other words, repeat often and summarize what the employee says. This encourages individuals to continue expressing themselves. Also, if the conversation seems stuck, get it going again by asking non-threatening questions focused on the employee's achievements: i.e. "What was it like to hit your target in September?" If she feels comfortable with you and you are focusing on her triumphs—no matter how minute—she will eventually move to the areas where or the months when her performance may have fallen short. Once she has brought up her poor performance level, then you can ask questions like, "What do you think was different this month?" and "What do you think you would like to do differently?"

The latter question is only non-threatening if it is asked in this context at this point of the discussion. If you start off the discussion with this question, it is accusatory and will immediately cause the individual to clam up because she feels attacked. It also helps that you have discussed her goals during the first part of the session, which suggests that her needs are important. It communicates, "We care about you." The key to a successful session is the ability to be a good listener; this is what allows individuals to develop a comfort level, which allows them to be prepared to assess themselves and work through their challenges.

What the individual should receive from the review of her IW Plan is a sense of appreciation, recognition, and motivation to improve her performance. She should also receive tips, suggestions, and additional tools that can assist her in hitting her targets. If the individual has achieved any of the rewards (*see Chapter 9. We Did It!*) as a result of outstanding performance with her individual objectives, this is also the time to congratulate her and reset objectives with higher targets, if she desires.

HOW CAN I MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER?

The final part of the session should focus on what you as the facilitator can do from an organizational perspective to make the job easier. This is to allow for any personality challenges, work environmental challenges, or even personal challenges to be resolved. Remember, the organization is a system of interrelated parts and any part can negatively or positively affect performance. This approach and discussion allows the individual to truly see you as a partner in helping her to reach her goal and can work quite effectively.

Some years ago when I had received my first managerial post, I was quite worried about how I would get the employees in my division to work with me. I was new to the organization and young in age. Most of the supervisors in my division were older in years and had been with the organization for a very long time, and now I was to become their manager. There was talk among them that I was too inexperienced for the promotion. I knew I had to find a way to get these supervisors to respect and cooperate with me. This was crucial because my first assignment as a manager was a major task that required their input and support to get it done. So, I decided to go in with an attitude of 'I am here to serve you.' In my first meeting with each of the supervisors, I said, "How can I make your job easier?" And I kept that attitude in all of my dealings with them. Not only did they cooperate, but they also went around extolling my virtues to everyone.

At the time, I felt it was a risky approach because I thought 'I am their boss,' but I discovered that being their boss doesn't have to mean using a stick to get things done. Once again, employees are human. They want to be treated with respect, and they want you to care about their needs. They want to feel that they are just as important as you are within an organization.

This approach allows employees to become comfortable with their supervisor and to focus more on achieving the organizational objectives because employees don't have to spend time 'keeping their walls up' due to feeling threatened. With this approach, they don't have to exist in fear or work from a perspective of 'it's me against the establishment.'

At times, there will be a need to remind employees of the commitment they made in their Statement of Responsibility. However, the 'how' is most important. One of the key things to making this model work is to not be so focused on the small things that it negatively impacts performance results: for example, obsessing with someone occasionally coming to work late. If an employee is over performing on their IW Plan and the lack of promptness is not causing any undue hardship, then this is incidental. While their agreement to be accountable as outlined in the Statement of Responsibility is essential, do not allow such a matter to derail the employee's efforts and results. Such matters in general should be handled with this philosophical approach always in mind.

This is the perfect time to ask the question, "How can I make your job easier?" This approach invites the individual to open up about the lateness to work. You may find that what happened during those times were legitimate incidences that could not be avoided; or, you may have an opportunity to help the individual strategize to avoid such occurrences in the future. The key is to discuss it in a way that is non-threatening and to ensure that you are seen as a partner wanting to assist in truly making things easier especially if the individual's lateness has no negative impact on work performance. However, I recognize that there will be times that it can have a negative impact on work performance; then strategies need to be discussed to address it.

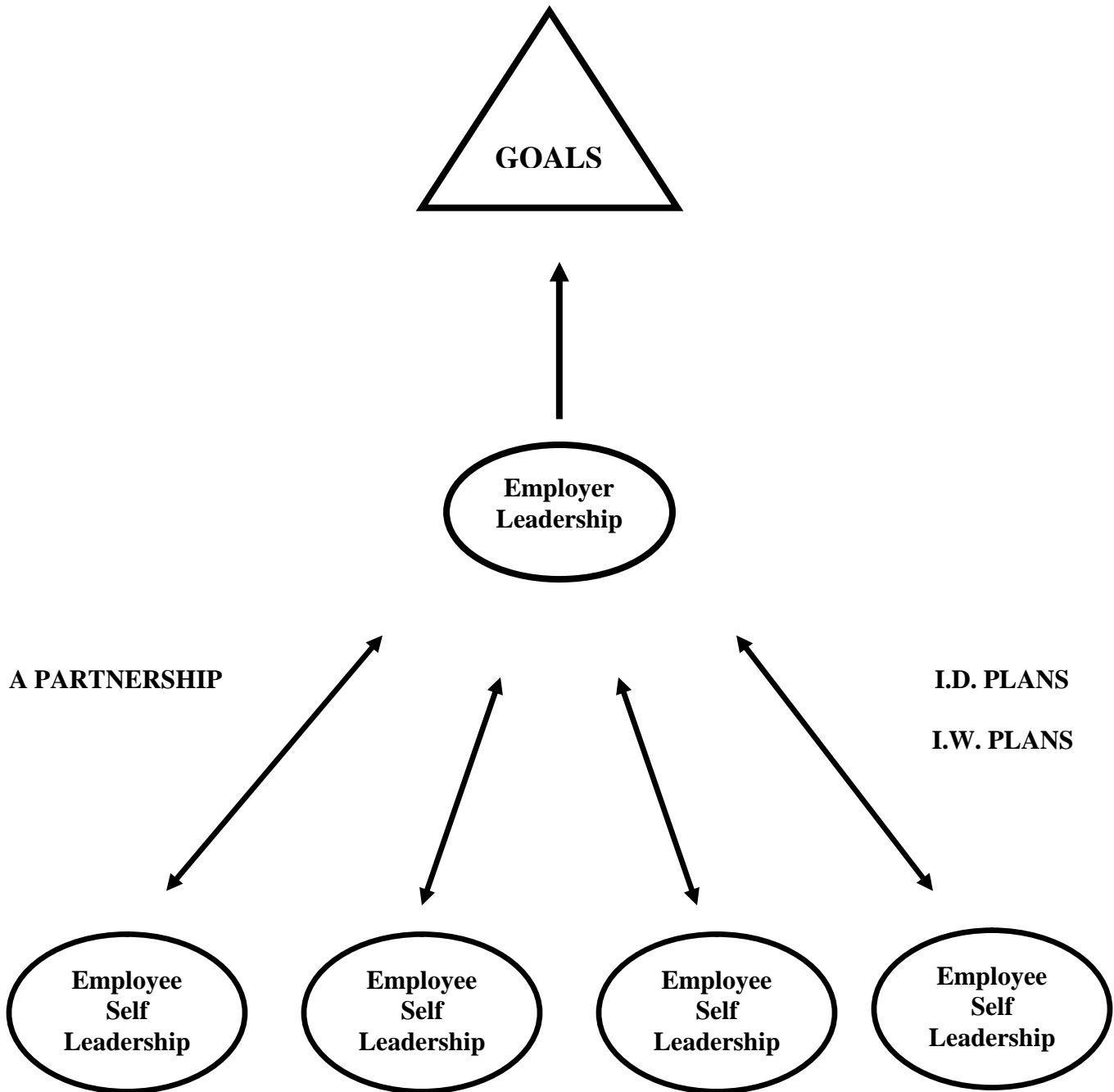
Nevertheless, the same attitude of ‘how can I make your job easier’ should be employed when discussing this.

More serious challenges that require drastic action will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

The WIIFM session with the Individual Development Plan is the employee-related aspect of this new consciousness model. The partnership agreement represented by the Individual Work Plan and Individual Development Plan must have equal focus in terms of level of importance, as both are essential components of this model. The sense of leadership and self-leadership makes this partnership complete. Diagram 2 reflects the relationship of the various components in this new consciousness model.

Diagram 2

A Different Path New Consciousness Model



THE GOALS OF BOTH PARTNERS CAN BE MUTUALLY INCLUSIVE

