



How to
Achieve Results
and Stop the
Zombie
Apocalypse

by David M. Dye

Does This Sound Familiar?

In the past two weeks I've spoken with people throughout many organizations including health care, technology, waste management, and human service and have heard variations on these themes:

- "I've quit caring."
- "I've just stopped trying."
- "Why bother?"
- "I give up."
- "Just go along to get along."
- "When someone bothers to tell me what to do, then we'll worry about it."
- "What's the point?"
- "It doesn't matter what you do."
- "They don't care, so why should I?"
- "All their statements from the stage don't mean anything for me and my life."

Odds are, at one time or another you've even uttered one of these expressions of frustration, surrender, or despair.

Most of us have...

And it's got to stop.

Walking Dead

Every time I hear one of these, I shudder.

Each of these statements represents a colossal failure in leadership.

If you have people in your team or organization talking this way, one of two things has happened:

1. You have discouraged your team by failing to lead. Or,
2. You have a very negative team member who will in turn be discouraging the rest of the team. (And

they're still there because you've failed to lead.)

Either way, it's time for you to lead.

Every person wandering around...

thinking that their effort makes no difference...

feeling that no one cares...

feeling frustrated and refusing to take responsibility...

Has quit.

Maybe they haven't left the organization or team yet, but there's no life left in their movement.

Like zombies...

They're a walking tragedy – a vital human life stunted and withering away. (Not to mention tons of lost productivity for the organization.)

And if you're leading, you're responsible.

Tough Love

If you want to lead, I applaud you. We desperately **need good leaders**.

But leadership means responsibility.

If people on your team are disheartened and have quit trying, that's on you.

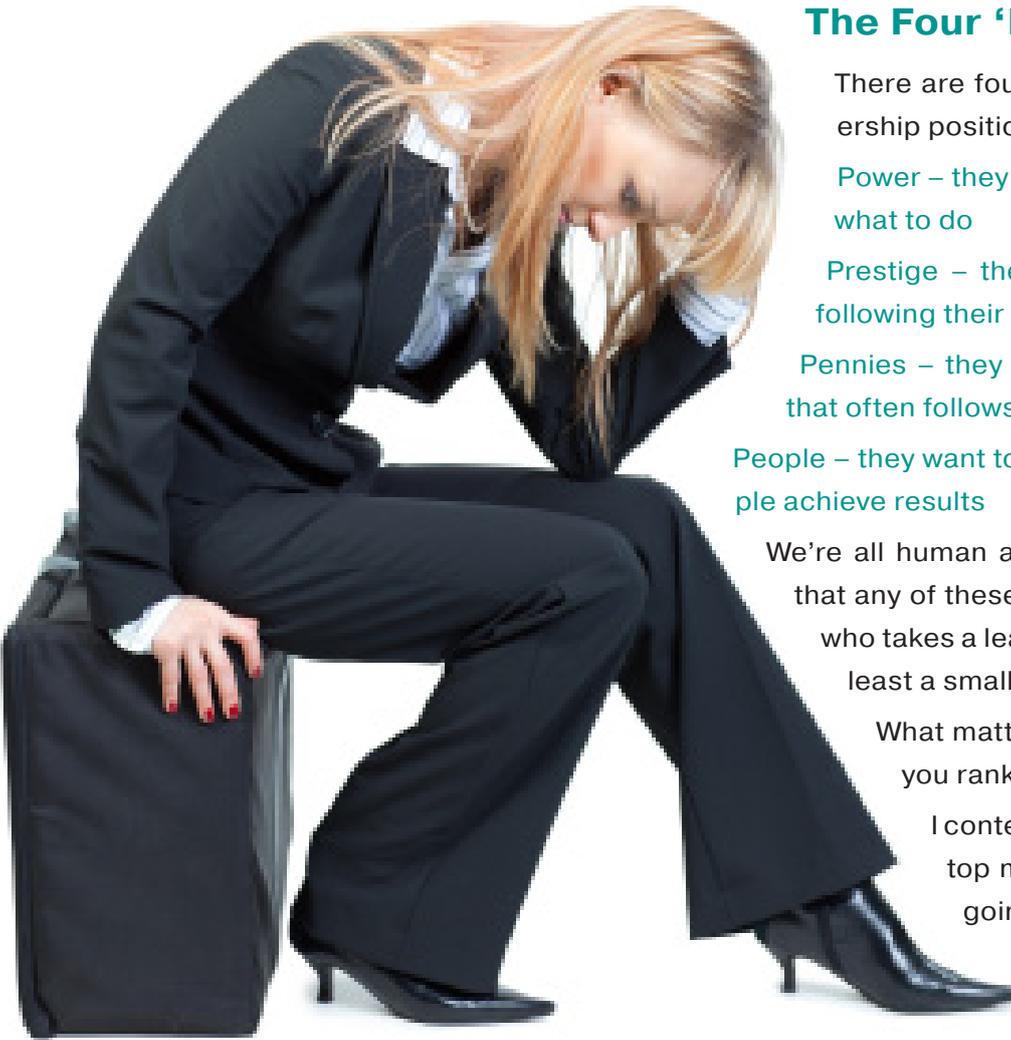
The reasons are usually straightforward:

- there is a lack of encouragement / appreciation or outright hostility and abuse
- there is no vision
- absurd systems prevent them from being effective
- they have no autonomy or ability to make meaningful decisions
- they don't trust their leader or each other

Time for some tough love: if your people feel this way...*it is your responsibility*.

They are not the problem.

"But I've been trying to encourage..."



The Four 'Ps' of Leadership

There are four reasons people take leadership positions in organizations:

Power – they want the ability to tell people what to do

Prestige – they gain status by the words following their name on a business card

Pennies – they desire the additional money that often follows added responsibility

People – they want to serve people and help people achieve results

We're all human and I don't mean to suggest that any of these are evil or immoral. Anyone who takes a leadership role probably has at least a small degree of each motivation.

What matters is the order – how would you rank these? Honestly.

I contend that if "people" is not your top motivation for leading, you're going to be a lousy leader.

"But I got into this business to make money, not to coddle people."

If people on your team are disheartened and have quit trying, that's on you

Perhaps. But whatever you're doing isn't translating.

"But Steve Jobs swore at his staff."

Maybe so. When you're able to motivate a team and produce loyalty that tolerates that behavior, come talk to me. Until then, stop abusing your people.

"But I shared the vision..."

Great. When? How long ago? How often? Have you explored your teams' vision? Do they know...not 'did you tell them'...do they know how what they do every day makes a difference?

These are a leader's responsibilities.

If you're really wanting to lead, I beg you to examine why.

Three responses:

1. Apparently you can't do this on your own and you need a team of human beings (people with dignity) to help you.
2. You would be making a lot more money if you truly led your people. They would be energized, productive, and solving problems you don't even know exist.
3. No one said anything about "coddling".

Service Doesn't Mean Soft

You can treat people well *and* be results-oriented. These are not mutually exclusive.

In fact, they go together.

People who...

- are empowered to make meaningful decisions...

- understand the purpose behind what they're doing...
- trust their leadership and their team...
- feel appreciated for what they do...
- feel they're making a difference...
- are held accountable for their contribution...

They own the outcomes, are energized, proactively solve problems, and personally invest in what they're doing.

Which team member would you rather have?

Where to Begin?

1. If you are leading a team that shows signs of the "walking dead", begin by honestly assessing your motivations.

Are you leading with people at the top of your priority list?

If not, I would encourage you to start small. Pick one area...perhaps it's encouragement, and begin honestly demonstrating appreciation. Or maybe it's removing a frustrating system that prevents people from doing their best work.

The point is, don't try to change everything all at once. You can't do it and you'll frustrate yourself. Start small.

If you're not sure where to start and you have any team members you can trust to give you honest feedback, ask them.

Or better yet, do a real 360 evaluation (with a coach) and pick just one thing – the most frequently occurring item, and begin addressing it.

People are remarkably graceful. When they see you really working on being effective, your credibility soars.

2. If you are in an organization characterized by the "walking dead", I encourage you to begin leading where you are.

Start encouraging the people around you. Recognize others for what they've done. Begin talking about what your team might accomplish or where

it could be. Lead by example. Look for problems you can solve.

Warning: taking these actions is not without risk.

In some organizations with insecure or dictatorial leadership, your actions may not be welcomed and people might be threatened. If possible, have a conversation and emphasize that you don't want to undermine their authority, but are trying to improve productivity.

Even if you cannot continue in that organization, you will have gained valuable leadership skills to take with you.

We Need Leaders

Whatever your formal role, we need you.

We need people who dare to dream, who show us the way.

We need people who are willing to take risks to solve problems that others refuse to recognize even exist.

We need people who ask the right questions, who challenge our thinking.

We need people who inspire us, who motivate us, and who encourage us.

We need leaders.

Discussion

How do you keep "People" above power, prestige, and purse in your leadership priorities?

Take care!



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