

DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE ON YOUR TEAM?



If you're an entrepreneur with a team of people helping you build your business, you know how crucial it is to have the right people "on the bus"—the ones who are truly invested in generating success for the company.

You also probably know how challenging it can be to find and recruit those people, and keep them motivated so they stay on your bus instead of transferring to someone else's.

The good news: It can be much easier to surround yourself with truly committed people if you start by understanding the level of engagement each of your staff members has. Armed with that insight, you can set out to elevate the most promising ones to a higher level of engagement—and perhaps release the least promising ones for opportunities somewhere else.

Here's how to get started.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The people on your team probably have various levels of both skill and personal commitment to your success.
- By elevating and motivating people the right way, you can potentially build a rock-solid team.
- Work with your people to identify, and elevate, their abilities and commitment level.

THE COMMITMENT CIRCLE

Not all your people come to work with the same mindset. Some show up highly motivated, while some work hard only if they fear being reprimanded. Others might seem more like new hires who have just started their first job, and still others might even resemble low-morale prisoners.

Ultimately, we tend to see four distinct types of team members, as summarized in the commitment circle (see Exhibit 2).

The commitment circle reflects the skill level of each team member (Can Do/Can't Do) and the emotional force driving them to perform as they do (Fear/Desire). The commitment circle tells us that team members will fall somewhere within one of the segments in the way they typically bring themselves to the workplace. They might move to any of the other quadrants in specific circumstances, but for the most part they will align with one of the segments more consistently than with any of the others.

These are the four segments:

- **Prisoners.** *In the Prisoners segment, team members don't believe in the vision of your business. They may think the vision is impossible or that the success of your vision is unimportant to their lives. They are also not capable of fulfilling the roles asked of them. They are driven by fear and lack the skills needed to do a great job.*
- **Trainees.** *Trainee team members believe in the vision of your business, believe it is possible and want it to be successful. However, they are still developing their capabilities in fulfilling the roles to which they have been assigned.*
- **Conscripts.** *Like Prisoners, team members who are Conscripts don't believe in the vision of your business. That said, they are capable of fulfilling their assigned roles. They are skilled but driven by fear.*
- **Volunteers.** *Volunteer team members believe in the vision of your business, believe it is possible and want it to be successful. They are capable of fulfilling their assigned roles and are full of desire and skill.*



A DEEPER DIVE

It's helpful to be able to identify where each team member currently resides in the commitment circle, so you (or a team leader if that's someone other than you) can take the necessary steps to ensure that the team has the right people "on the bus"—and that everyone is in the right seat. Likewise, each team member should understand where they fall and how—if they are willing and able—they can move to the Volunteers segment.

1 - PRISONERS (DRIVEN BY FEAR; UNSKILLED IN THE JOB)

Prisoners are neither willing nor able to be excellent team members, and they cannot see any benefit for them at all in the company's core story. In many instances, Prisoners do not realize that their prison is really their own reactions and decisions in response to circumstances. Prisoners may be quite aggressive or hostile, but they may not even see that as a problem because they may have no other way of dealing with the personal threats they perceive from what is (to them) a hostile environment.

Prisoners need to be made to face a foundational decision: Do they want to be a part of the team at all? Prisoners need to answer the question "What's in it for me?" by identifying any enlightened self-interest where the company's success impacts their own success. Discovering this can result in Prisoners moving directly into the Trainees segment.

These should be your key objectives when dealing with Prisoners:

- Ensure there is a match of position and person—individuals may be in jobs for which they have never been skilled or may not be suited.
- Start a discovery process for Prisoners. Do they actually want to be there?
- Maintain frequent and consistent contact. It can be both formal and informal.
- Do not deviate from required procedures and processes without some measurement discipline (or alternative control discipline) in place.
- Don't beat around the bush; ask them to make a decision. Be present, draw them into being present as well, and facilitate their own assessment of whether they want to be there or not and whether they are prepared to try to make the changes needed.

2 - TRAINEES (DRIVEN BY DESIRE; UNSKILLED IN THE JOB)

Trainees can't do what you need them to yet, but they have the necessary desire and passion. Trainees are Volunteers in the making, but they require a clear development path. Therefore, Trainees often do best when they work with Volunteers who can mentor and coach them. Too little focus on training and development can cause them to slide into the Prisoners segment. Trainees can experience very high levels of anxiety, for example, when they try to improve their performance but don't achieve immediate results. They require structured feedback on performance, both good and bad, with some emphasis on the "how to" of improvement.

Your key objectives when working with Trainees:

- Ensure that they receive feedback, both positive and negative.
- Formalize potential learning partnerships between Trainees and Volunteers.
- Provide lots of positive recognition of effort, with a focus on the consequences of high performance.
- Structure the environment and endeavor to remove barriers before they become consequential.

Spend time developing their skills and encouraging them so their desire stays strong.

3 - CONSCRIPTS (DRIVEN BY FEAR; SKILLED IN THE JOB)

Conscripts are capable of technical excellence but often don't deliver it. Conscripts are driven largely by fear (of being disciplined or fired, for example) and therefore apply themselves only because of compliance or directives from you or other superiors. They don't see why they should make more effort than is needed in order to just stay under the radar. They don't particularly want to be part of the organization, but they're too nervous or "in a rut" to move on.

Training in specific work skills will not improve Conscripts. Their development needs to be along the emotional dimension. This requires them to ask themselves, "What's in it for me?" Once they have answered that question, they really need to think through the obvious next question: "How can I contribute?"

Key objectives when working with Conscripts:

- Ensure a frequent, formal feedback process.
- Provide regular, informal recognition of positive team behavior (as opposed to technical skills—in other words, highlight contributions ahead of technical competence).
- "Catch them" doing well. Let them see that they are resisting something they already do quite well.
- Be consistent about performance expectations and the consequences of both poor and excellent performance.
- Stay close, and hold them accountable as you highlight their positive contributions.

4 - VOLUNTEERS (DRIVEN BY DESIRE; SKILLED IN THE JOB)

Volunteers are ideal for any team and company because they are aligned with what the organization wants and they have the passion and skills to make it happen. Volunteers think about how they can help others move forward with new ideas, and they generally have a positive view of the environment. However, they also believe that should the environment change unfavorably, they have the capacity to modify the environment or aspects of their own approach.

Volunteers are generally self-empowered and have learned that they control their own destiny by controlling their responses to circumstances. However, Volunteers are too often overlooked in businesses because they perform well and don't often require recognition or attention. Be careful: Eventually the desire for recognition (if not satisfied) can cause Volunteers to become Conscripts.

Volunteers don't like to see barriers to performance and will have a high expectation that while they are performing well, such barriers should be removed. For example, if Volunteers are performing well but are continually required to use a substandard system, they will eventually push back.

These are the key objectives for leaders of Volunteers:

- Provide real recognition, immediately following successes. This does not necessarily mean more money. Peer-to-peer recognition should also be encouraged.
- Communicate openly and honestly with respect to suggestions made by Volunteers, including what is happening with the idea, the likelihood of success, and alternatives that might be considered or the reasons why the idea won't be implemented.
- Ensure that their ideas and concerns are not treated dismissively.
- Avoid the common mistake of taking them for granted. Recognize and acknowledge their impressive contributions, and do all you can to remove any barriers to their success that they perceive.

NEXT STEPS

Now you have a map of where each of your team members "lives" while at work. Use it to categorize each employee so you can determine which approach is best to take with each one. Envision how your business would be different if all team members were in the Volunteer segment. Then convey these concepts to your team so they can see the value of having an all-Volunteer organization—and how you'll be framing future discussions with them about their paths forward.



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VFO Inner Circle Special Report

By Russ Alan Prince and John J. Bowen Jr.

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