



## Why Does Your Company Need a Champion?

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In olden times, a champion was someone who fought for or defended a person or cause. While this may seem like an archaic idea, it is still vital in today's business climate. You may have a great idea, vision or strategic plan, but without a champion, new initiatives or projects are easily ignored or forgotten.

Ideally, a champion should be among senior leadership, if not, mid and lower level employees will quickly see that they are being told "Do as I say, not as I do," which is a sure-fire recipe for failed outcomes.

Many times senior management gives the OK for changes to be made, then disappear from the process. It doesn't take long for employees to notice, and motivation to make those changes quickly dissipates. In work agreements with my clients, I stress that desired outcomes can be disappointing, even non-existent, if the project lacks a champion. A champion is not the same as a cheerleader - a champion helps exhibit the company culture and helps employees to understand the why (mission, brand promise, unique selling proposition), the what (job roles and responsibilities), and the how (the behaviors and conduct expected from each individual contributor.) They also demonstrate that they are working toward the same desired outcome.

That's why it is so important to ensure that those in senior leadership and management positions are a true fit with your organization and company culture. While it's tempting to look at a resume full of impressive skills and experience, it boils down to a frank discussion on temperament, attitude and how those traits fit within your company. That applies to everyone, not just new hires.

When senior leadership is neither engaged nor willing to drive the project, energy and momentum suffer. When senior management feels they can sit back and let the rank and file do the heavy lifting it is every bit as damaging as passive-aggressive behavior, second-guessing or back biting behind boardroom doors. With a champion leading the way, the benefits compound to include additional positive outcomes, such as higher employee retention and lower operating costs, even increased customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Whether you are planning a full-scale overhaul of workflow processes or reviewing the fit between employee's skills and assigned tasks, the presence of a champion increases the enthusiasm, drive, and commitment across all departments to achieve a new level of success for the company.

It may seem extreme to remove those in top positions when their behavior doesn't demonstrate full buy-in on company initiatives, yet your company's overall success depends on it. A solid company structure, from top to bottom is critical to the success of implementing new processes or products. Before you put your plans into action, remember to identify your champion. Then get going.

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