



# Practice What You Preach: What Managers Must Do To Create A High Achievement Culture

*David H. Maister*



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Firms that are perceived by their employees to actually practice what they preach are more financially successful than their competitors, says consultant David H. Maister, based on a worldwide survey of 139 offices in 29 professional service firms in 15 countries in 15 different lines of business.

Maister asked the simple question: Are employee attitudes correlated with financial success? The answer, he found, was "an unequivocal 'Yes!'" Further, the author shows that high levels of employee commitment and dedication "*cause*(yes, cause) a demonstrable, measurable improvement in financial performance." Maister proves that if your firm doesn't promote enthusiasm and high morale in your employees, your firm will make less money.

So, how can you create a culture in your firm that promotes growth and superior financial returns? Maister discovered that the most successful firms surveyed excelled by doing well on things to which most, if not all, firms pay only lip service: commitment to clients, teamwork, high standards, employee development, and other familiar topics. However, what distinguishes the best from the rest is that the best live up to their own standards.

Digging deeper by conducting in-depth interviews with managers and employees of the firms he surveyed, Maister has found that the key to success is not the systems of the firm, but the character and skills of the individual manager. He explores in detail the central role of the manager (what he or she must be, must do, and must require of others). The reader will find specific action recommendations from the managers and employees of these "superstar" businesses on how to build an energized workplace, enforce standards of excellence, develop people, and have fun -- all as powerful profit improvement tactics.

*Practice What You Preach* can help any manager increase firm growth and profitability, and will provide proof to firm executives that great financial rewards come from living up to the high standards that most businesses advocate, but few achieve.



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