



R-r-rev Up the RPMs of Your Organization

*How to make **R**elationships, **P**erformance and **M**orale
work together for forward movement and continuous improvement*

An extended brief on *Unity of Effort* in an Positive Direction by J. Bert Freeman



J. Bert Freeman is the CEO of T.A.L.K. Associates, which he founded in 1987. His work has evolved with the times. Since 2001, He has shown people and organizations, how to master positive direction for the 21st Century in: Communication Skills•Organizational Unity•Workplace Respect•Team Excellence •Leadership Consistency. He is the author of *Taking Charge of Your Positive Direction* (2006) and the Organizational ESP Performance Development Manual (2010). Unity of Effort in a Positive Direction is an essential framework for keeping 'Everybody on the Same Page with Excellence on the Same Page'. This is a learning and information brief.

Jan Carlzon (1987), former president of SAS Airlines, referred to every interaction with a customer as a “moment of truth”. He said SAS Airlines has “50,000 moments of truth a day”. The power of those statements resonates with me today, reinforcing the importance of meeting or exceeding customer requirements and expectations, everyday. Those of us who work for organizations that provide products or services to others have one thing in common: customers experience our efforts, either directly or through others. Therefore we are a part of every moment of truth, even if the customer is out of our sight. The primary direction of the organization is customer satisfaction. Our primary role is to unify our efforts in that direction. Our customers require accurate and successful performance and delivery.

The success of an entire organization can be impacted by how well relationships, performance and morale work together. In the early 1990's, in a conversation with a colleague, I remember saying that performance is most important in an organization, even in life. My friend said, “Performance is only part of it. People need to be recognized. They also need to have opportunities”. That conversation expanded my thinking to understand that those who work in the same place have working relationships that may impact performance. Then I thought that when I like my job or I like my working conditions, my morale can also affect my performance. After categorizing relationships, performance and morale, I learned that our **human activity** at work is in one of those three categories. I call them the RPM's of the workplace – the realities of human activity (functioning and interaction). Relationships, Performance and Morale work together best when they are the bi-product of the workplace. Rather than doing them, we experience them. They are the result of what happens. What needs to happen in the workplace for the RPM's to receive consistently high marks from everyone?

Relationships, performance and morale (RPM's) are often and appropriately thought of separately in matters of the workplace. There is any number of times on any given day when one requires more attention than the other. Imagine taking on the roles of making relationships, performance and morale work together in a way that we can have the very best performance and delivery so that we can meet or exceed the requirements and expectations of those we serve. Here are simple workplace descriptions of each:

Relationships – The ways that two or more people or groups interact together

Performance – Efforts of participation; the measures of outcomes or efforts

Morale – The degree of motivation to perform, participating and interacting due to willingness, liking, enthusiasm or dedication

The best way for the RPM's of an organization to work together is for each of them to have the same focus: meeting or exceeding the requirements and expectations of the customer. As you

categorize the *human activity* of your organization under relationships, performance or morale, make sure that the focus is on the customer. Always make the customer a part of the ‘reason why’.

Imagine that you have cups in your organization that are filled with servings of relationships, performance and morale. The **CUPS** in *RPM* is an acronym for **C**oncentrate, **U**nify, **P**osition and **S**ustain, the formula that keeps Relationships, Performance and Morale working together. The effectiveness of your organization depends on how well the *RPM*’s are *stirred* together and how full the cups are kept. To fill the **CUPS**:

- Concentrate **RPM**s on customer-focused delivery
- Unify **RPM**s toward a shared vision
- Position **RPM**s in a Consistent Positive Direction
- Sustain an **RPM** Climate of Interaction for customer-focused success.

This formula will accelerate your progress and the progress of your organization for the success required by your customers/clients/students. From this point on, I will generally use the word *customer* when referring to anyone (**customer, client or student**) who uses the services or products of an organization. The *RPM* frameworks are designed to work in any organization.



These are the actions that everyone in your organization can take to cause relationships, performance and morale to work together in the direction of the successes, the results, and the outcomes that are required or desired. The following is a brief explanation of each of the actions and what will make it most effective.

Everyone Concentrates on customer-focused delivery

This means that everyone in the entire organization concentrates on supporting the performance and delivery of the frontline folks. Who are considered as frontline? Frontline folks are those who have the direct task of delivery of products and services to the customer. For example, in a restaurant it would be the waitress or waiter; in a manufacturing organization it would be a finished product machine operator and/or the sales representative; in public transportation it would be the cab, bus or train driver; in human services it might be the case manager; in education it would be the classroom teacher; in healthcare it would be doctors and nurses. Imagine every person in the organization knowing that one of the most important parts of his/her job is to concentrate everything he does on supporting frontline performance and delivery, in a way that the frontline will have the very best performance, so that customers can have the very best success and experiences.

The organization is divided into two main categories: 1) frontline and 2) everyone else. Everyone else is called the organization's Smooth Operating System, abbreviated Smooth OpS. The Smooth OpS includes leadership, maintenance, food service, quality, medical, internal transportation, human resources, finance and other support services. The biggest part of their job is to make frontline people great. Once, an employee of one of my clients said to me just after attending an RPM session, "If it weren't for us, the frontline wouldn't be able to do their jobs..." She understood that the support employees were just as important as the frontline. It is what the Smooth Operating System does, that makes the frontline employees most effective.



Therefore, it is important to know what helps to make a Smooth Operating System most effective. For example, how should organizational changes be handled?

When key *organizational* decisions or changes need to be made or when someone has a great idea, two core questions can always be asked and one optional question also:

- How does this impact our frontline performance and delivery?
- What support does the frontline need for continued successful performance and delivery?
- Optional question: What support does our Smooth OpS need to successfully concentrate efforts on *supporting* frontline performance and delivery?

Most important! After these questions are asked, ***get the answers***. Then act!

In counseling, directing, performance evaluations and personal or professional development situations, the core question to *individual employees or groups* is, **“What support do you need to...?”**

- “What support do you need to be on time from now on?”
- “What support do you need to continue your outstanding performance?”
- “What support does the team need to finish on time?”
- “What support do you need to be successful in your personal development plan?”

Remember, after you ask the question, ***get the answers***. Then act!

Many times, frontline folks are the last to find out about organizational changes. Yet, the working day of the frontline employee is most critical to delivery and customer satisfaction and success. Therefore, learning the impact on frontline performance *before* a change is made, can help to make adjustments that can save thousands, even millions of dollars. Asking the core questions first and getting the answers is one of the most cost effective, *RPM* enhancing habits that an organization can develop. This should at least be a part of every leader’s standard, from the frontline supervisor to the board chair or president, self-directed and empowered individuals and teams. Best of all, it will help the organization’s excellence in customer-focused performance and delivery.

The phrase ‘customer-focused’ simply means that the reason for relationships, performance and morale to work together is the customer. The customer as the ‘reason why’ should be at the core of workplace interaction – customer satisfaction, meeting customer requirements and expectations, client or student success and growth. Therefore, everyone focuses relationships, performance and morale on the customer while they ***concentrate*** on supporting frontline performance and delivery.

Everyone *Unifies* relationships, performance and morale toward a shared vision

Having a shared vision is essential. A vision is the one place everyone moves toward in different ways. The vision unifies the organization. An essential to unify toward a shared vision is to have a vision *statement* that is easy for everyone to remember. A great vision statement should:

- Reflect that the organization is the best or among the best at what it does
- Be beyond the current state
- Be focused on the product or service recipient
- Be concise and one sentence or less and easy to remember
- Be embraced by all

- Be measurable: If it uses terms like *great*, or *world class* or *the best*, find out what that means for your organization by either comparing it to other organizations that are similar to yours or by originating the definition yourself
- Be stated in the present tense

If the organizational vision statement is created by the CEO, the superintendent, the director or the principal, that leader takes a chance on whether everyone else in the organization will embrace it. It becomes *his/her* vision rather than *our* vision. When you hear phrases like the “superintendent’s vision” or the “CEO’s vision”, that is a sign to find out whether the vision is embraced by the rest of the organization. The best way to establish an organizational vision statement is to include a cross section of people at *every level* especially frontline folks. When every employee in the organization has been represented in establishing a vision statement, they feel empowered and take pride in making *our* vision a reality.

An organization’s quest should be to make the vision a reality rather than just a noble try. If your organization says that it is “world-class”, the first thing you want to do is to find out what ‘world-class’ means then proceed to make *world-class* a reality. If your organization says that it is the “model”, then determine what it means to be the ‘model’, then proceed at making your organization the *model* for everyone else in that field to follow. How will you know when your vision is a reality? When your *customers* say that it is!

Equally important are three other essentials that increase the assurance of RPM’s working together toward a shared vision in the workplace:

- **Direction of Excellence:** Everyone’s excellence is unified in the direction of the customer
- **Internal Partnering for the External Customer:** Everyone is an internal partner for supporting front line performance and delivery to meet or exceed customer requirements and expectations.
- **Workplace Respect:** Multilevel respect in the workplace is an inherent contributor to customer-focused organizational unity and making the vision a reality.

The Direction of Excellence – In a Unity of Effort framework, ‘excellence’ is the accurate and successful effectiveness, efficiency and execution of tasks, always in the direction of meeting or exceeding customer requirements and expectations. Many organizations possess a high degree of excellence among their employees. Often the excellence of many goes in different directions. There are also different levels of excellence – some employees are better than others. When the organization endeavors to correct or protect the excellence of a person or task, the direction may still exist. Getting all of the excellence in the same direction makes it easier to make the correction - ***first the direction; then the correction***. That increases the assurance that the correction will be made in the direction of customer satisfaction and/or success.

The Unity of Effort framework is best managed by “Synchronizing the ***Direction*** of Excellence”. The Direction of Excellence includes three components:

- The Direction of Concentration – Everyone knows where to concentrate his or her efforts
- The Direction of Support – Delivery of services and products to meet or exceed internal support requirements and expectations so that the front line can have the very best performance and delivery to meet or exceed customer requirements and expectations
- The Direction of Focus – Customer satisfaction and success always being a part of the ‘reason why’

Such excellence involves everyone: leadership, finance, HR, logistics, quality, front line, food service, technology and more. Imagine the entire organization with excellence in the same direction. I call it ESP: **Everybody on the Same Page with Excellence on the Same Page.**

Internal Partnering to meet or exceed customer requirements and expectations

In a Unity of Effort in a Positive Direction framework, all internal relationships and human connections, including relationships and connections with the front line, are considered internal partnering for customer satisfaction and success. **Key elements of Internal Partnering include:**

- **Support** – e.g. Smooth OpS delivery to internal Partners in a way that best concentrates on supporting frontline performance and delivery
- **Performance Expectations** – e.g. job requirements, meeting/exceeding performance objectives, task completions, appropriate behavior, timeliness, ‘accuracy and success’, safety
- **Cooperative Performance Obligations** – e.g. meeting compliance requests/requirements, response to administrative requests, info for record accuracy, timeliness
- **Communication and Information** – e.g. talking to each other, providing clarification, using Core Questions, sharing data & info (Accelerates Progress)
- **Support Requirements** – e.g. services or goods required by Internal Partners from Smooth OpS branches or individuals to best support frontline performance and delivery (can be required by frontline or Smooth OpS)
- **Helping people to ‘PLAY’** instead of making them pay – Focus on what people need to do successfully rather than to dwell on making them pay for what they did or are doing; e.g. educate about correct behavior, help to manage compliance, be invitational instead of confrontational, provide guidance, ask Core Questions

Workplace Respect is an essential part of strengthening organizational unity. If you have a rule of only respecting those who respect you, you limit the opportunities to bring the best out of people. However, if you *always* exercise respect for everyone whatever the circumstances, you set yourself up to take advantage of the creativity and productive decision making that moves things forward. When you label people, you *look* for the label that you give them. If you call someone ‘selfish,’ for instance, you may recognize that *one* characteristic in the person enough to hide other qualities or motives that may help or impress you. Take the label away. That increases your power to develop a productive relationship that works. It helps you and others to work together successfully.

***Unity of Effort* in a Positive Direction™**

The combination of *Concentrating* on frontline performance and delivery and *Unifying* toward a shared vision yields the core of what is called *Unity of Effort* in a Positive Direction. The *Unity of Effort* framework can be used for short and long-term organizational success, from retaining great employees to implementing and executing strategic plans. It includes:

- Leadership Consistency
- High performance delivery
- Customer satisfaction/success
- The **R**elationships, **P**erformance and **M**orale for all of the above

A *Unity of Effort* framework requires a leadership consistency that enables an environment for *Unity of Effort* to thrive. Leaders become adept at coordinating leadership practices in ways that are driven in the direction of the customer. For example, getting answers to the core questions helps them to more easily make organizational decisions or adjustments.

Recently, one of my clients hired a new employee; we’ll call her Sue. Sue showed excellent promise. However, after one month she wanted to resign. The ‘*Unity of Effort*’ savvy manager realized the impact of recruiting, hiring and training another employee compared to asking a simple question, “*What support do you need to continue working for us?*” The manager *got the*

answers. Sue said, “I need adequate training about my job. I need to know what to do and how to react when I’m faced with…” She went on to explain in detail the unique situations that she had encountered in the month that she had been working there. After that conversation, the manager arranged for Sue to receive additional training in the areas that she expressed she needed more strength. Sue stayed and is now more confident in her role within the organization. The *Unity of Effort* framework equipped the manager to *know what question to ask* and to *get the answers* possibly saving thousands of dollars and months of recruiting, interviewing and rehiring someone to replace an already excellent choice. That core question had an impact on the *RPM*’s experienced by the new employee. It helped to keep the **RPM CUPS** full.

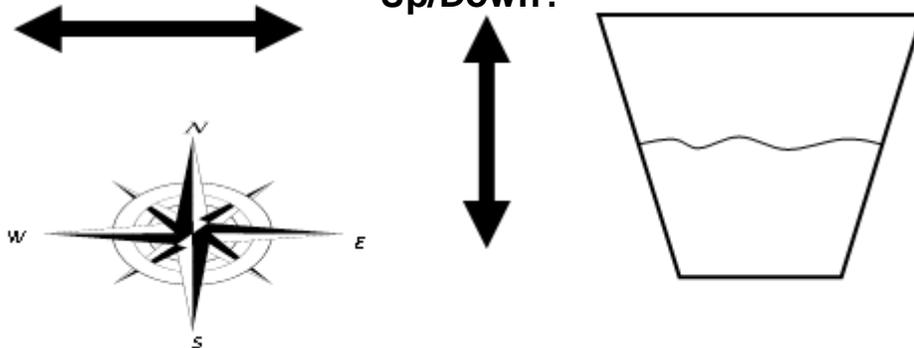
The core question, “*What support do you need to…?*” is vital when an organization is considering changes of any kind. However, even if the decision has already been made, ask the core questions and get the answers *anyway*. By doing so, you may get information that could show the necessity to make an adjustment that will keep frontline delivery as good, and even better than it already is. Your question could make a positive difference in relationships, performance or morale, making you like oil to an engine, keeping the system working smoothly (Smooth OpS). Additionally, asking and answering the core questions could lead to significant cost advantages while still keeping your workforce intact. When ‘Concentration on Front Line Performance and Delivery’ and ‘Unifying Toward a Shared Vision’ are combined with **Consistent Positive Direction™**, it becomes even more effective.

Everyone Positions *RPM*s in a Consistent Positive Direction

Consistent Positive Direction helps you to practice another dimension for yourself and your workplace - *Direction*.

Which way is positive direction??

Half Full/Half Empty?
Forward/Reverse?
Up/Down?



In my book, *Taking Charge of Your Positive Direction*, **Consistent Positive Direction** is described as “skills and approaches to speak, write, learn and impact reality in the *direction* of the required and desired outcomes, results, accomplishments, achievements, goals, objectives and/or successes”. ‘Positive thinking’ became one of the most significant learnings in the twentieth century. **Consistent Positive Direction** takes you into the twenty-first century with the language to identify and use *direction* in your positive thinking, speaking *and* attitude. I began my company, T.A.L.K. Associates, many years ago with language and direction in mind. The

title of my book implies that *you* are in charge of your own positive direction rather than someone else's. The power is within you to control the *direction* of what comes out of your mouth. Your tongue can steer you in the direction closer to the success that you want or farther away. If you want success, then talk success. If you want teamwork, then talk teamwork. If you want trust, then talk trust. Let the language of ***Consistent Positive Direction*** navigate you to the success that you want; the achievements that you want; the results that you want; the goals, objectives and/or accomplishments that you want. In an organizational *RPM* context, the direction of success and results always includes the direction toward the customer – customer satisfaction, client success or growth, student achievement.

In a conversation that I had with a manager one day, she talked about how she was working on a project and that another person that she had to work with was, “slowing things down and didn't seem to want the project to be successful.” She said that she could only do so much because the person outranked her. My response was that rather than to focus so much on the differences between her and the other person, make the other person an ally. In other words, create the circumstances that will cause the person to *want or feel a need* to help you so that the project can be a success. “Also,” I said, “instead of predicting how the person is going to act, create the circumstances that may produce a better relationship. That means that *you* may have to do something different too.” I saw her about a month later and she said that she did what I had suggested and it worked. She said she focused more on making the other person an ally to her and the project. She also made some changes in the way she acted, which created more favorable circumstances for them to work together. They even became friends, she said, and the project was working even better than she could have imagined. In ***Consistent Positive Direction***, that is called **PC Upgrade** – going from **P**rediction to **C**reation. This is just one of the skills and approaches that are great for improving organizational relationships, performance and morale.

Even in the most demanding situations, you can use ***Consistent Positive Direction*** to move things forward and get things done. It takes practice and the more you practice the better you get. Here are some of the core skills and approaches for rev-v-ing up the *RPM*'s in your organization.

- **Reality** – Interact more about the reality that you want to move toward instead of the reality you want to get away from. We are designed for *forward movement*.
- **Starting Line** – Your current reality is your “*starting line*”
- **Start Options** – Talk more about what needs to ‘**START**’ rather than what needs to ‘stop’, especially when you refer to ‘working together’. We are designed for *continuous improvement*.
- **PC Upgrade** – Create the circumstances that need to occur for success, instead of often predicting the way that people will act to take away from success.
- Help people to ‘**PLAY**’ instead of making them pay.
- **TOLLing** (Total Open Listening and Learning) – Practice listening skills and approaches that connect positive direction to our critical and everyday experiences.
- **Exercise Complete Respect in a Positive Direction** – Your organization's ability to accelerate forward movement and continuous improvement in diversity, inclusion and individuality. This is an essential for organizational unity.
- **Attitudinize yourself, your team and your organization in a positive direction** – Just as people possess different attitudes, teams and organizations possess different attitudes. Attitudes are often reflected in relationships and morale either of which can impact performance. *Attitudinizing in a positive direction* means to express attitudes in the direction of the success or results that are required or desired. Whatever feelings you have, you can always express them in a positive direction. A team may feel that, “Nobody gives us the recognition that we deserve for the work that we do.” In a

positive direction the team can say, “We need to be recognized for the work that we do. We want to be able to receive awards and opportunities like others in our organization!” The meaning and feeling can be just as intense. By using the forward-focused language of *Consistent Positive Direction*, you influence more agreement and action toward the desired or required results.

- **The RPM Power Principle** is a *solution-focused* decision-making tool to help the organization ‘behave’ its way to a required/desired success. It was inspired by Kurt Lewin’s concept, “Force Field Analysis” (www.valuebasedmanagement.net) which identifies organizational strengths, based on the dominance and potential of driving or restraining forces. Using the *RPM Power Principle*, for each category of organizational relationships, performance and morale, ask two questions: **1)** What will take the organization closer to the success that needs to be accomplished; **2)** What will take the organization farther away from the success that needs to be accomplished? After answering those questions, you are better equipped to effect the access, the activities and the behavior that move you closer to your goals. Plus, you will be able to help yourself and everyone else to stay motivated by sharing and celebrating successes along the way. When you identify attitudes that take you farther away from your goals, you will know how to translate those attitudes into positive direction activities that also bring you closer to your goals. You will need to know the positive direction skills that help you to partner more effectively with each other. Your attitudinizing skills will accelerate your forward movement when you encounter situations that are particularly demanding.

Everyone Sustains an *RPM* Climate of Interaction for customer-focused success.

Over the years, I have been associated with a number of great organizations and I have had many experiences in business and industry and in life. I learned what it takes to sustain a marriage, as well as to build and sustain a business. I learned a lot about being the best and *wishing* that I was the best. I also learned that, just when you think you ‘passed the test’, you will be tested again and again. I learned that on any given day a person will have differences and agreements about someone or something. Sometimes, just when you think you have things all figured out, they change.

One of the most rewarding experiences that I have had with ***Unity of Effort*** and ***Consistent Positive Direction*** is the realization that “*We can do something about things!*” and “*We can make things work!*” The next level then, is sustainability. How do we make it last? The answer: put a Climate of Interaction into place that makes it easier for everyone to function *for the customer*. Here are twelve factors to include in that Climate. They are called the **CI Factors**:

- a. **Communication and Information** – Talking to each other; sharing knowledge
- b. **Creativity and Innovation** – Allowing new/old ideas to build toward the required reality
- c. **Consistency and Inclusiveness** – Reliable, uniform daily effort and *everyone’s* perception that he/she is a valuable participant in the organization’s function and success
- d. **Collaborative Involvement** – Participating by combining work and ideas; Everyone partnering for success, including collaboration with customers/clients
- e. **Continuous Improvement** – Building on the progress that has already occurred; being as good as we are and better than we were; listening to the data.
- f. **Cooperative Interdependence** – Managing, understanding and coordinating the dependence and impact of our actions on one another and being open to listening and learning and to sharing similarities and differences, to sustain success
- g. **Cultural Infusion** – Establishing key practices, interactions and relationships as organizational standards, policies, procedures and/or practices
- h. **Cost Inducement** – Streamlining efforts, and resources to concentrate most efficiently and effectively on supporting front line performance and delivery, in ways that relationships, performance and

morale increasingly and inherently contribute to sustained performance excellence *and* financial stability.

- i. **Customer Inclusion** – Connecting delivery outcomes of support services to front line delivery and customer experience.
- j. **Critical Inputs** – In addition to learning the skills and approaches, *using* the skills and approaches increases your capacity to accelerate progress. Growth creates more growth; possibilities create more possibilities. It works because you use it.
- k. **Concentrated Interventions** – Improvement actions, processes or programs that are narrowly focused to correct or adjust organizational, system or individual behaviors. They are conducted in alignment with the skills, approaches and practices of the “Unity of Effort in a Positive Direction” framework. This factor focuses strongly on assurance of accuracy, success and efficiency rather than prevention.
- l. **Cycle of Influence** – Leaders influence workplace consistency; the workforce influences leadership consistency all in the direction of meeting or exceeding customer requirements and expectations.

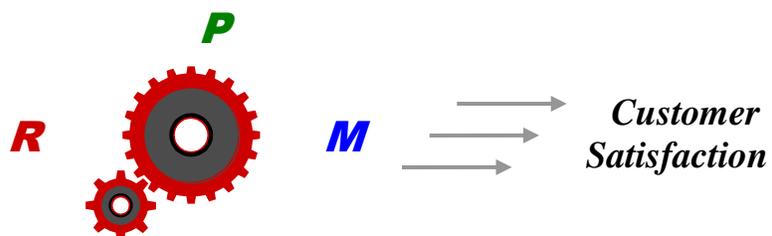
Before I realized that it took all 12 factors that are listed here for an organization to sustain a Climate of Interaction for success, I thought that Cultural Infusion was all that was needed. However, when the other factors exist in an organization, the chances of successful sustainability are increased. They are best enabled by practices of ‘Unity of Effort in a Positive Direction’.

The combination of *Positioning in a Consistent Positive Direction* and *Sustaining a Climate of Interaction for Success* takes us to the next level. This extension of *Unity of Effort* expands the mastery and capacity of an organization to practice minute-to-minute customer-focused excellence and direction. Leaders become adept at enabling customer-focused climates of interaction that help the **CI Factors** grow and thrive. Leaders learn and use organizational skills and approaches of **Consistent Positive Direction** that *accelerate* progress for forward movement. Leadership teams can increasingly enable a climate of trust in an environment of differences. Attitudinizing is a team effort as well as an individual effort. The workforce becomes increasingly self-directed in sustaining customer-focused climates of interaction that empower success.

Rev Up the **RPM**’s in Your Organization

With the Unity of Effort framework, organizations become focused and flexible. The entire organization concentrates on its frontline’s performance and delivery so that the customer will have the very best experience. The customer will always be a part of the *reason why*. The skills, approaches and practices also provide the flexibility needed for day-to-day, minute-to-minute functioning of the organization as well as implementing and executing strategic plans. Sometimes you may have to put more of the day’s energy into either one of relationships, performance or morale. As highly effective performers in the workplace, you will instinctively know where to put your energy. In a highly effective organization, all three work together using the “**Unity of Effort in a Positive Direction**” framework – keeping your **RPM CUPS** full.

Keep your organization in high gear by *r-r-revving* up your RPM’s for customer satisfaction, growth and/or success.



Since 1990, J. Bert Freeman and T.A.L.K. Associates have been providing expert assistance to organizations for years in matters of organizational unity of effort. Uniquely, T.A.L.K. Associates is the only learning and development company whose facilitators include the language, skills and approaches of Consistent Positive Direction in everything that they do. They are practitioners as they teach.

To implement and develop a Unity of Effort framework for your organization or team, contact T.A.L.K. Associates at:

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