

## EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: A CASE FOR COMPASSION

In our executive coaching practice, we have described Executive Vitality in these terms: “The more vitality you have, the more able you are to focus, to achieve, and to enjoy. If you have vitality, you have the exuberance, the physical stamina, and mental and emotional vigor to pursue your vision and mission as well as live the values of your organization. What's more, you can then be more available for people who need you outside the office as well. Your vitality provides you with the capacity to thrive and live a meaningful, purpose-driven existence.”

Engaging in compassionate practices improves one’s executive vitality. Studies show that [compassion](#) improves one’s focus, enjoyment, mental and emotional vigor, living one’s values, availability to others, and particularly living in a meaningful, purpose-driven way. Being on either the receiving end or the giving end of compassionate behavior has been shown to improve one’s well-being.

Many studies at academic institutions such as Stanford, Harvard, and the Universities of California, Chicago and Texas have looked at the outcomes of compassion. Those studies have shown compassion to have positive impact on physical and psychological changes, brain activity, cancer rates, depression, and other conditions. According to [Psychologicalscience.org](http://Psychologicalscience.org), research shows that people who are compassionate in their behaviors are happier, healthier, and experience less stress, more connectedness to others, and more of a sense of purpose—all are aspects of executive vitality.

Examples of companies that are devoting resources to compassion training might surprise you; including Google, a company that learned early on that [compassion fosters not only greater happiness but also greater profits](#). Intel and SAP are both mentioned in [Fast Company's article about working smart](#). Executives of those companies see improvements in engagement, morale, and profit.

Here are some tips to increase the compassion level in your organization.

- First, look in the mirror. Has your position insulated you from the concerns of the people who work for you—at any level? Does compassion underlie your decision-making, policies, and procedures? If you do not know the answer to those questions, devise ways of finding out; ask.
- Second, help your team behave compassionately. Does your team practice compassion in their dealings with direct reports, customers, each other? They may require feedback and coaching to heighten their awareness and change their behavior.
- Third, ensure the culture set at the top and permeating the organization reflects compassion. Is your organization’s culture reflective of compassion, conscious capitalism, and collaboration, or of combat, competition, and coldness?

*How would you describe the culture in your organization, particularly in regard to how people treat each other and customers? Would compassion be on the list? What would change if more compassion was part of your organization's DNA? What changes do you need to make personally and organizationally to behave more compassionately in your relationships, in the community, with your customers?*