

5 Ways to Identify a White-Hot Passion in Leaders

If there's one characteristic I see in successful leaders, it's passion.

The more church leaders I connect with, the more I see this trend: leaders of growing churches (and growing organizations) have a white hot passion for their mission.

You can hear it in their voice. You can see it in their eyes. It spills out of them.

If you want to see it in action, [listen to this message by Perry Noble](#). His personal passion for the mission of his church oozes out of him as he speaks.

It echoes one of my favourite quotes from John Wesley: Light yourself on fire with passion and people will come for miles to watch you burn.

By contrast, leaders of stuck or declining churches or organizations generally do NOT burn with drive, desire or passion. In fact, I can't think of a single leader of a growing church who isn't passionate about their mission.

The problem for most of us is we can't tell what kind of leader we are. We live in our own skin. It's hard to get an objective read on our passion level.

I think there are **5 ways you can tell if you're truly passionate about what you do**.

Will your passion level always be white hot? No.

My passion level has gone up and down in seasons, but overall, for me to be effective as a leader, it has to be high. I know that in the seasons in which my passion has been white hot, I've led the best.

Here are 5 signs your passion level is white hot.

1. You have a hard time shutting down

Passionate leaders have a hard time shutting down. They are obsessed with the mission. This isn't workaholism...that's different.

I'm talking about people who care so much that it becomes part of who they are.

And yes...I realize there's a ton of potential pitfalls in being obsessed with your work or even having your identity wrapped up in it. But I don't think Jesus spent most of his days pining for 4:00 so he could go home and watch Jeopardy after dinner or work on perfecting his golf score.

Yes...he took breaks and rested. But his burden was always for people and for his Father.

To be transparent, I've grown a little weary of people who call for 'balance' in life and in mission. [As I outlined in this post](#), most leaders who make a significant difference don't live balanced lives; they live *passionate* lives.

Of course, there is a ton of meaning outside work, but too many people forget there is a ton of meaning *inside* work and ministry.

Obviously, to make life work, you need clear boundaries. The best leaders find clear boundaries, but as a rule, they have to restrain themselves from putting too much time into the mission.

If you want to see what happens when you put TOO much time into the mission, you can listen to [Perry Noble and I talk about our periods of burnout in this interview](#). Plus there's a ton of helpful [resources on this page](#) to help anyone who's burning out.

The goal isn't burnout—it's passion. And passion can be hard to turn off. That's actually a good thing!

2. You invest on your own dime and your own time

I think what you do on your own dime and your own time speaks volumes about your heart.

If work is something you do only when someone else is paying or when you're officially on the clock, it speaks volumes about what you really value. I've worked in churches that have had no budget and I've probably over-invested in the ministry at the expense of my family. That's not what I'm talking about.

But truly passionate leaders don't mind picking up the check personally, or taking part of a 'day off' to work on a project or help someone out once in while.

If you're only working when you're working or paying when someone else is picking up the tab, chances are your passion isn't white hot.

3. Possibilities excite you more than problems weigh you down

Passionate leaders are always more excited about the possibilities than they are weighed down by problems.

In every organization there are problems, and sometimes there are BIG problems. But passionate leaders are determined to remove problems—even big ones—and get moving because the possibilities are so exciting.

Where other leaders see only obstacles, passionate leaders see opportunities.

If you see more problems than possibilities, it will be hard to motivate a team to follow you. So how do you get your eyes off the problems?

- Leaders who focus on the **possibilities** find the problems tend to take care of themselves.
- Leaders who focus on the **problems** find the possibilities eventually evaporate.

Choose your focus carefully.

4. You can't stop investing in people

Don't get me wrong, passionate leaders have hobbies and pursuits that have nothing to do with work. They cycle or fly fish or BBQ or run marathons or camp or do yoga.

But passionate leaders can't help but see people through the lens of their life mission.

- They pray for their neighbours.
- They throw parties for unchurched friends.
- They hang out with people who are far from God because it's part of who they are, not just a part of what they do.
- They become beacons in their community and people who want nothing to do with Jesus come to them for advice.

They can't help but bring the love and hope of Jesus in some way into every aspect of their lives.

5. The mission is something you GET to do

We have a very negative view of work in our culture (especially Canadian culture). That can seep into our world view as church leaders.

Not every day is going to be a picnic in ministry. You will have headaches and frustrations. Some days you will drag yourself in. You will make yourself do what you're called to do simply because you're called to do it.

And even though I've said "Love what you do and you'll never work another day in your life" before, I [agree with Jon Acuff that the saying isn't 100% true](#). (Read Jon's awesome perspective [here](#)).

Some days are work. And that's okay.

But overall, leaders who have a white hot passion for their mission realize work is something they *get* to do, not something they *have* to do.

The difference in your attitude will leak to your team and to your congregation. And Christians, we GET to do this! God could have brought hope and forgiveness to people any way he wanted to, but he chose you.

Ministry is a privilege, not a burden.

Do what you love...and you'll love what you do.

What do you think?

What are some signs you've seen that a leader's passion is white hot?

Would you like to learn more about discovering passion and vision? [Connect with an Auxano Navigator and start a conversation with our team.](#)