

## Exercise: Leadership and Strategy in King Henry V

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**Course:** MGT 458  
**Title:** Decision Making and Creativity (3 units)

“Those of us who study and conduct research on organizational and managerial phenomenon need to have our thinking stimulated and deepened by writers of fiction who are insightful observers and interpreters of everyday life.”

--Lyman Porter (Professor Emeritus, UC Irvine)

### Goal

The purpose of this exercise is help students understand how to link text in a Shakespeare play to a topic of importance to a student of management. The following excerpt is from Henry V, Act, Scene 1, lines 1-2, 17-23, and 29-34 (New Penguin Shakespeare, 1977).

By way of many empirical studies, leadership is arguably the most valuable activity of management. As a component of leadership, it is important to understand the nuances of motivation, particularly how “followers” will think, feel, and act in the context of a large, diverse, complex organization.

### Sources

This exercise was inspired by and adapted from an idea presented in the following book:

Corrigan, P. (1999), *Shakespeare on Management: Leadership Lessons for Today's Managers*, Kogan-Page.

## Part I. (original text in Early Modern English)

(context) (King) Henry V is giving a speech to motivate his troops in a long-suffering battle against the French in northern France.

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;

Or close the wall up with our English dead...

On, on, you noblest English,

Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof?

Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,

Have in these parts from morn till even fought

And sheathed their swords for lack of argument;

Dishonour not your mothers; now attest

That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you...

For there is none of you so mean and base;

That hath not noble lustre in your eyes,

I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,

Straining upon the start. The game's afoot;

Follow your spirit, and upon this charge

Cry, "God for Harry, England, and Saint George!"

From Early Modern English (Elizabethan/Jacobean) to Contemporary English

"breach" means "front lines"

"fet" means "fetch"

"war-proof" means "prior victories"

"beget" means "created"

## **Part II. (a contemporary, business speech interspersed with the original text)**

(context) You (future manager or executive) are giving a presentation to motivate your staff to increase sales in the face of global, free-market competition.

*Again, colleagues and friends, we need to face our competitors head on;*  
Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;

*Or else we may be forced to eventually file Chapter 11 bankruptcy*  
Or close the wall up with our English dead...

*Although we are deeply motivated, we need to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity,*  
On, on, you noblest English,

*Didn't our cherished founders create this company in earnest and show us the way?*  
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof?

*Our talented and efficacious industry leaders, such as Jack Welch and Steve Jobs,*  
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,

*Who persevere, and develop new products and services 24/7*  
Have in these parts from morn till even fought

*And didn't even have to fight all the time because everyone knew their work was the best;*  
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument;

*And exclaim loudly that you won't disappoint all of the families that depend of your effort*  
Dishonour not your mothers; now attest

*Because they and the founders are, from heaven, watching and helping you even now*  
That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you...

*I know that none of our employees dislike everyone else and is so self-centered*  
For there is none of you so mean and base;

*So as to prevent you from seeing the value in crafting deserved, righteous success in this economy*  
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes,

*I see my employees full of new ideas that are just waiting to be released and developed further*  
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,

*I see it in all my discussions with you—emails, the “suggestion box”, and small-group, quality circles.*  
*The level of competition in this industry is high;*  
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot;

*Develop your ideas into new sales with new customers for new products*  
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge

*And be successful not just for me, but for a vaulted employee, our company, and your country.*  
Cry, “God for Harry, England, and Saint George!”