

**BUSINESS EYE**

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# Motown's formula for success

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**T**his week's utter tripe masquerading as purposeful insight comes to you following my visit to see 'Hitsville: The making of Motown' at the Pinewood Cinema on Friday evening.

I wasn't expecting it to be an object lesson in entrepreneurship and business wisdom.

From its modest beginnings in Detroit, Motown has gone on to cover the world and is probably the most iconic record label in history, with artists from Stevie Wonder and the Jacksons to Diana

Ross and the Supremes, not to mention Neil Young and the Temptations.

It turns out that Barry Gordy failed at his first attempt to produce and sell records.

He went bust and had to take a job on the shop floor at the Ford Motor Company.

For some this could have spelled the end of their dreams, but Barry took the opportunity to learn that success requires a blueprint for systems, from talent spotting, through development and into quality control.

He now puts his success down to the combination of his love for what he was doing and the creation of this business model, which would never have come about had he not witnessed and experienced it from the shop floor.

So much of this film runs true with what it takes to succeed in leading a team.

The first component is that every leader needs a wingman, muse or foil to complete them.

Realising you need others to complete you is the first door to big success.

Only small minds think they know best.

Gordy's wingman was possibly the greatest musical talent of his era - Smokey Robinson.

You can tell that they bounced and sparked off each other.

The second ingredient for success is to be resolutely focused with an unbending desire to win and succeed in your mission.

For this you have to love what you are about, and for this to happen across a whole team you need to understand that people are not machines and that love and expression need to be encouraged.

In so many workplaces, the energy becomes quashed under heavy, grey politically correct rules and regulations.

Having fun matters to success.

So does trying, failing and learning.

It is a little-known fact that Motown employed the best people they could afford for the job despite being closely linked with Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

Their head of sales was a white Italian, they employed Hispanics and Jews and they placed women in some of the most senior roles.

All of this despite being born of the 'Brothers in 'The Hood' at the time of civil unrest.

Diversity matters.

Finally, the most potent learning from the movie is that competition spurs talent onwards and upwards.

The artists competed with each other for songs, the writers fought for artists until they found a winning formula each time.

I heard it through the grapevine that the Marvin Gaye classic, which sold a gazillion copies was first recorded by the Miracles and Gladys Knight and the Pips before becoming its iconic self.



Marvin Gaye in Notting Hill, London. (PIC John Minihan/Evening Standard/Getty Images)

So, there you have the formula for success.

Have a dream.

Find a muse.

Create a plan.

Employ the best people you can afford.

Only employ people better than you.

Encourage love, collaboration, competition and fun.

Be modest about your talent.

Let the light shine on others.

Make the world a brighter place one smile at a time.

Easy.