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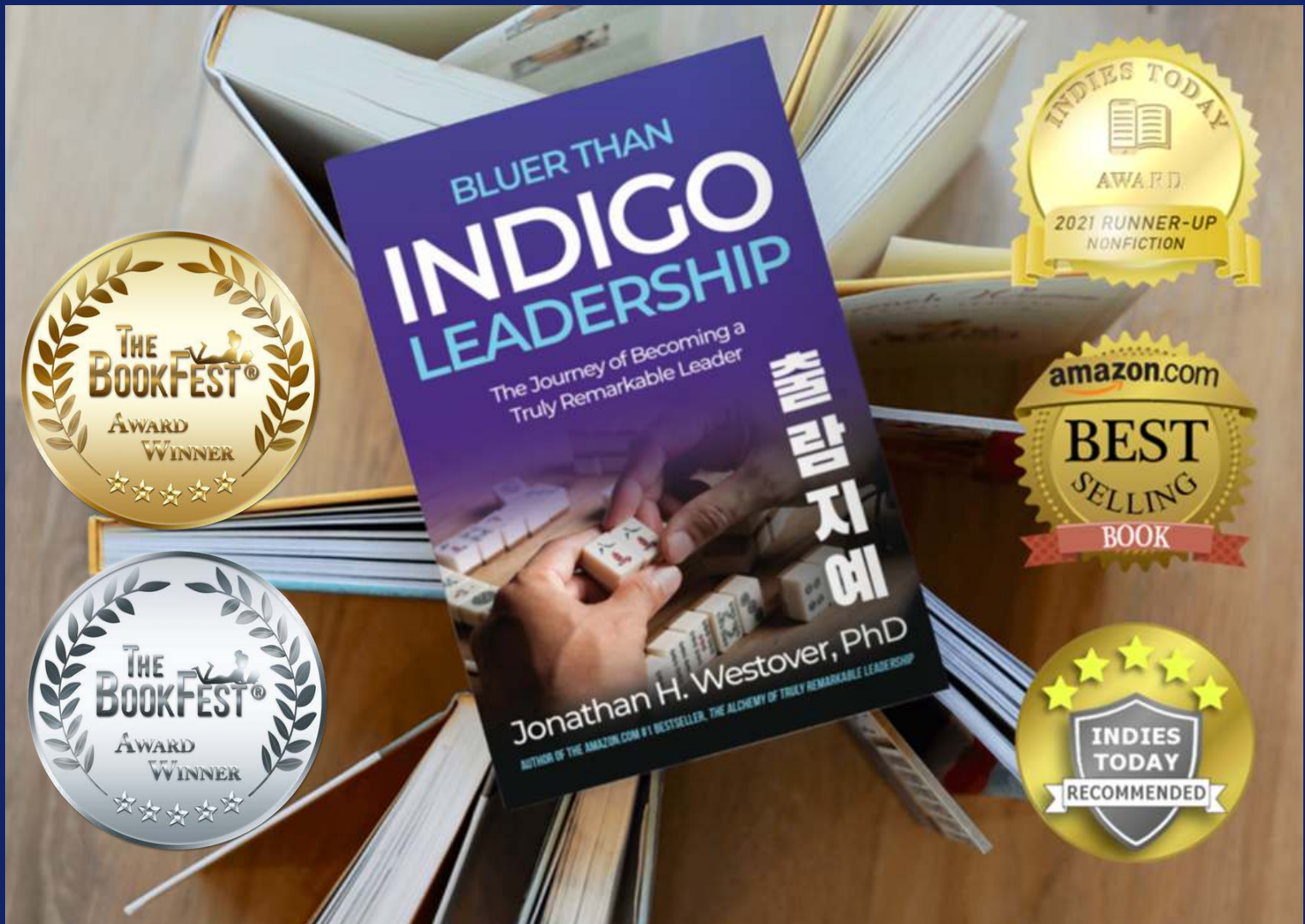
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"Dr. Jonathan Westover is an accomplished professional that in his latest book, The Alchemy of Truly Remarkable Leadership, focuses on leadership characteristics and qualities that produce extraordinary results in the new world of work. Dr. Westover methodically weaves together leadership competencies and capabilities for anyone aspiring to lead and alchemize an organization to attain business goals and workforce agility. This is an excellent guide and reflective tool for leaders to refine their capabilities and qualities and pivot towards the future."

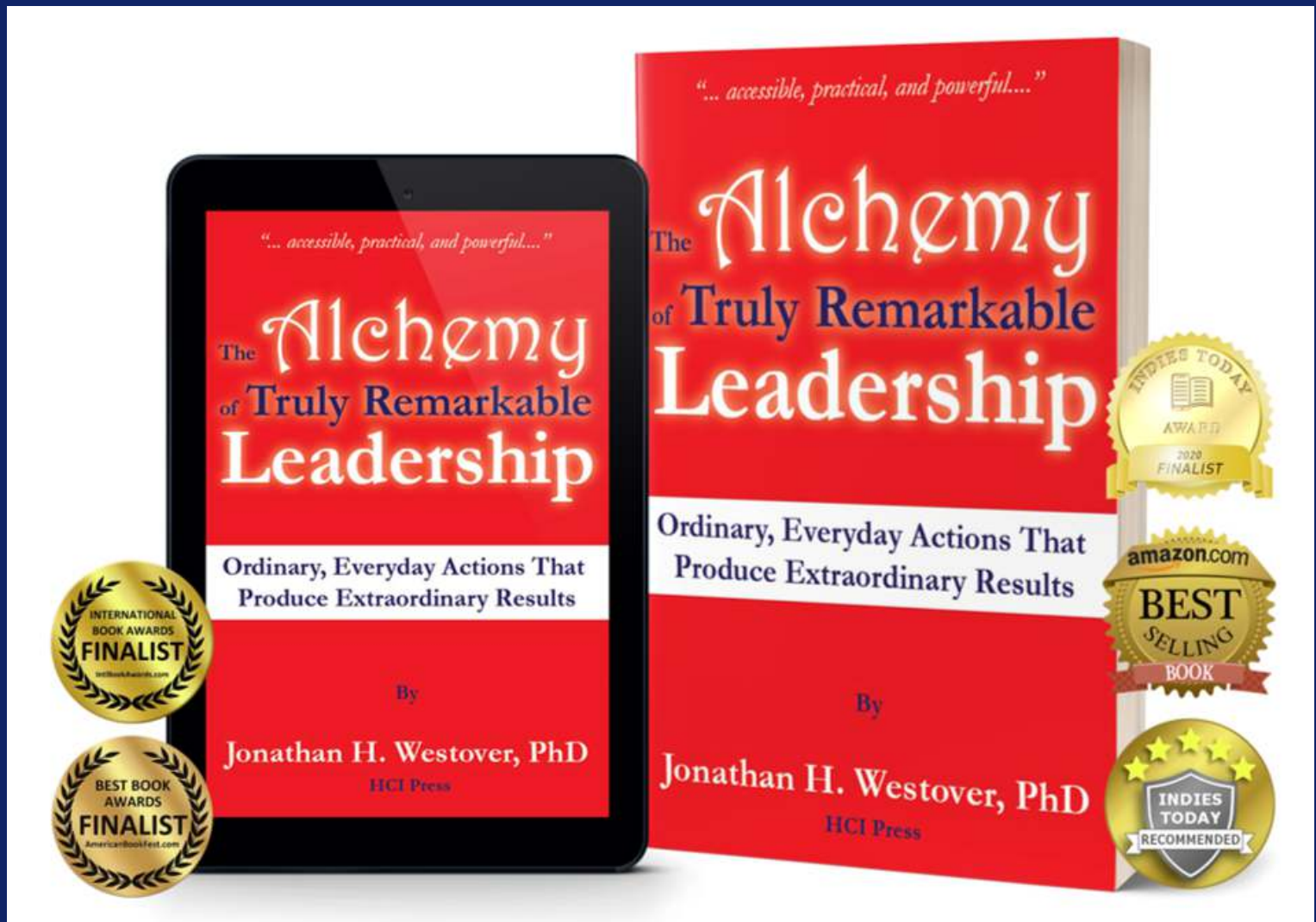~ Dr. Amy Dufrane, SPHR, CAE, CEO of HRCI

The Alchemy of Truly Remarkable Leadership: Ordinary, Everyday Actions that Produce Extraordinary Results, by Jonathan H. Westover, PhD.

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Contents

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The Top Seven Ways to Avoid and Fight Burnout

by Adam Wright

Nowadays mental health in the workplace is one of the most talked about topics, with stress, anxiety and tiredness being the center of the debate. In fact, whether you work for a company or as a freelancer, it's very likely that there will be moments in your work life that will be overwhelming and tiring to the point of reaching a point of so-called "burnout."

Experts from health and nutrition information site Life Hacker Guy have listed some ways with which you can either avoid burnout altogether or at least deal with it in the healthiest way possible, in order to take care of both your mental and physical health.

1. Get Enough Sleep

Nothing recharges and calms us better than sleeping the right number of hours per night. Moreover, trying to function without little to no sleep is extremely dangerous and it does nobody any good, including your boss and colleagues.

Eight hours per night should be a must for many reasons: from boosting your immune system to lowering the risks of serious health problems such as diabetes or heart diseases, and of course improving your mood and reducing stress.

But even though the body needs sleep, sometimes it can be hard to get our mind to cooperate. In these cases, it's essential to create the right conditions and adopt habits to help you be calm and relaxed when sleep time is near. This can be achieved by keeping your room dark with blackout curtains or a sleeping mask, reducing noises by wearing earplugs and keeping your phone either on mute or in another room entirely, keep temperatures cool, and avoid watching TV or working where you're supposed to sleep.

2. Exercise Multiple Times a Week
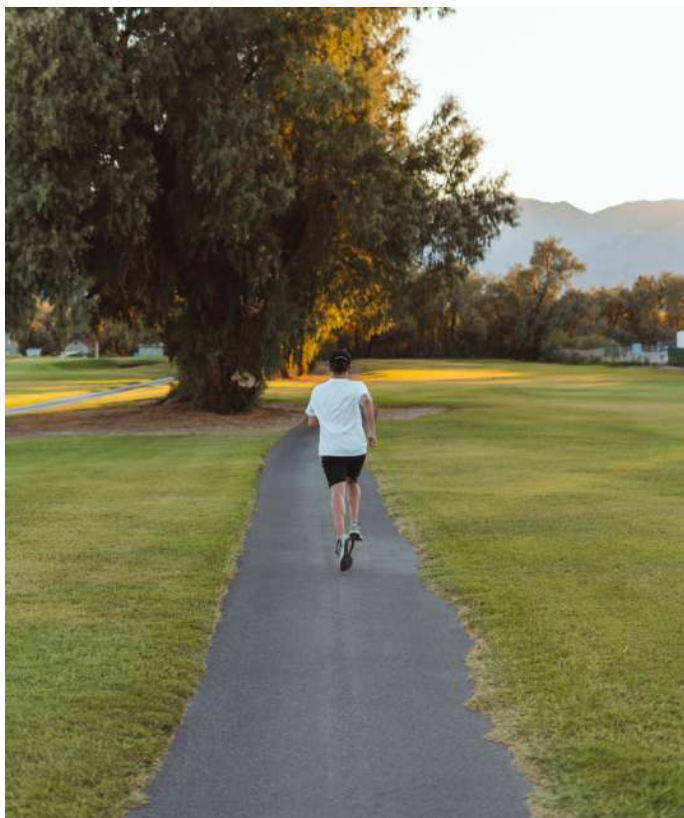
This does not have to mean a gym membership or a home gym, exercising can be as easy and accessible as a walk or a run around the block. If you want to start a journey of light exercise to keep yourself refreshed, healthy and distracted from work, try to start with something that's too simple to ignore or to postpone, such as a 15-minute stroll around your block, or outside your place of work.

3. Program a Balanced Diet

Even for people who are not so-called "workaholics," it's possible to lose focus of what's important during the day, and that also goes for meals. Loss of appetite is indeed one of the red flags that can signal burnout and to avoid it it's important to try and eat regularly. One way to not lose sight of this is to program your meals, and when possible, even meal prep for the whole week. This can be done on a Sunday as a part of a fun 'weekly reset' routine, choosing simple but balanced and healthy recipes that can be prepared quickly and that will make you look forward to lunch every day.

4. Keep a Journal

Visualizing your anxiety or stress can be a great way to cope with it, and keeping a daily or weekly journal can help you do just that. Most often one of the biggest problems is not being able to talk about what is going on in our heads, either because we feel like we have nobody to talk to or the practice isn't conforming to our personality.

In both eventualities, writing down our thoughts and feelings can help, and by doing this, it can be easier to let go of them. In the eventuality that you might not know where to start, try using specific journals that give daily tips and tricks on how to, these can be questions to answer, motivational quotes and so on!

5. Treat Yourself

It is essential to remember that we do not live to work but rather work to live. Treating yourself to a nice dinner once in a while, or that pair of shoes you've put your eyes on can be a great way to feel important again and to remember that your life does not revolve around work. Burnout can often occur because we lose sight of the why, and these treats will allow you to grasp touch with reality again.

6. Learn to Ask for Help

Admitting that you're not in the best shape, or that simply you cannot undertake a task on your own, and that you might need some help is one of the healthiest approaches you could take to not only fight burnout but to improve your work life as a whole.

You're not invincible and you are not supposed to be, so always remember to recognize your limits and to not push yourself too far. This applies not only to work-life but to every aspect of it, as it's possible to feel drained and overwhelmed with any type of social interaction and everyday task, from meeting family and friends to maintaining a healthy relationship, as well as having a balanced lifestyle.

7. Recognize the Signs and Act on Them

If you get to a point in which you were not able to avoid burnout, try your best not to ignore that feeling, no matter how bad it might feel.

Symptoms such as procrastination, loss of appetite, constant tiredness, feeling overwhelmed, and having self-doubt can be recognizable, and while sometimes it can be hard to admit that you've got to a certain point, acting on those symptoms quickly enough can prevent a period of enhanced pain, stress, and anxiety.

This article was written by Adam Wright, founder of the LifeHacker Guy. Adam regularly writes medically cited and fact-checked articles about upgrading your life through health and wellness. Learn more at lifehackerguy.com
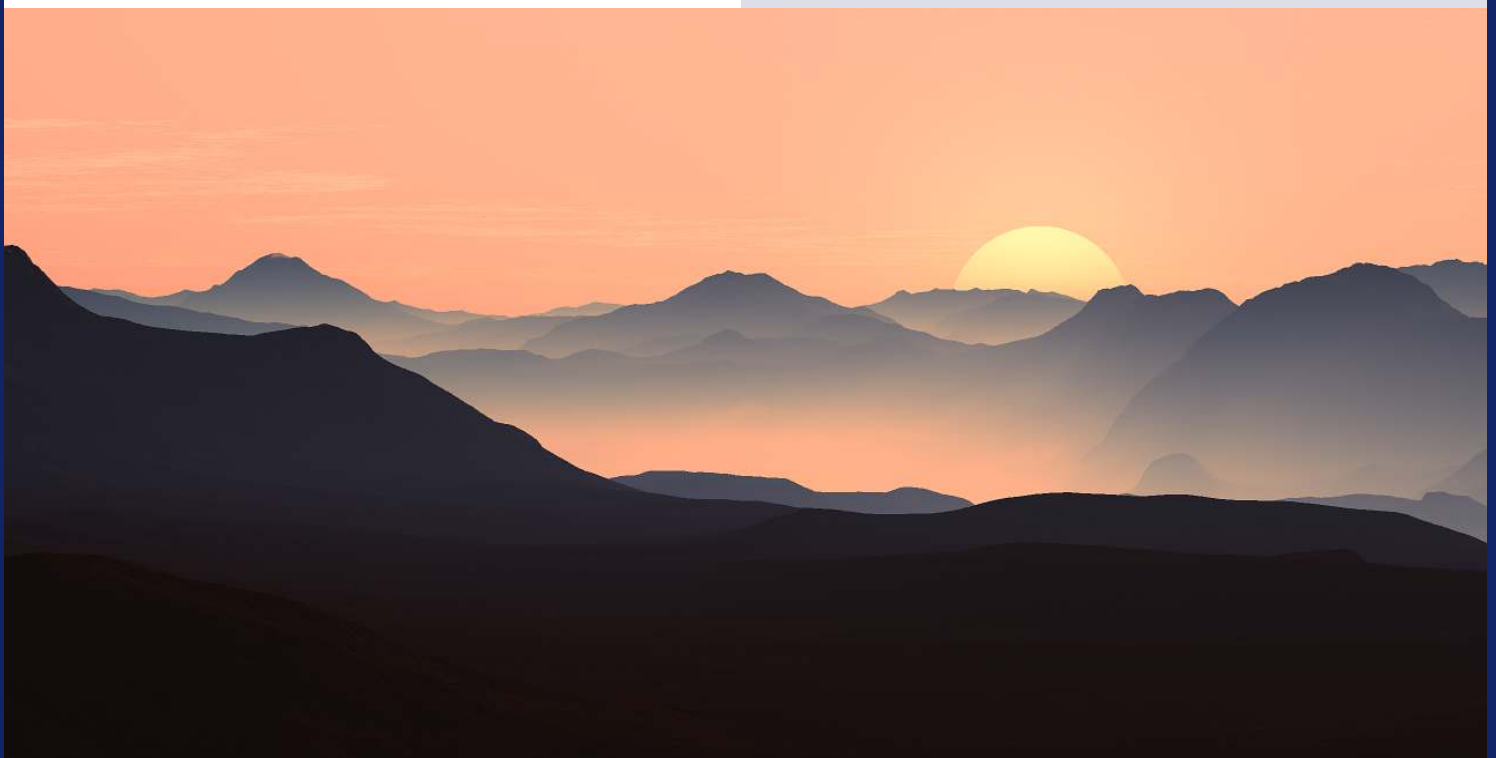
How to Embody a Successful and Sustainable Business

by Sofia Sundari

The biggest challenges I faced in building my business were my team and my mindset. I thought I needed to clone myself and was working 18 hour days, I didn't stop. Then I realized this wasn't healthy or sustainable, so I created a management system and I stopped doing the things that weren't my key strengths.

For a long time I regretted that I hadn't studied business instead of law at university and then my mindset shifted and I realized that I can lead my business from my heart and my intuition. Of course, I made mistakes. I hired the wrong people just because they had business experience, but they weren't aligned with my values and I learnt from that. I now have a team of 5 staff who are aligned and committed to the business on a full-time basis.

Our team is based across Europe, from the UK to Croatia and when leading a remote team it is important to keep people connected whilst still productive. This is why I regard the team community as the number 1 aspect to their performance and therefore the success of the business. This is something many businesses neglect. I have the following structures in place to maintain, enhance and improve this:

1) <u>Utilizing IT to Our Benefit.</u> Even though we have always been a remote team in recent times, as remote working has become the norm on a larger scale, IT systems have been up-leveled to help businesses achieve the best from remote workers. We use a mixture of programs; one keeps track of our email communications, in particular for customer service purposes, and another is a task management system. This system ensures we keep on top of tasks and if someone is unwell or on leave other team members can easily access their tasks to see what needs prioritizing in their absence.

2) <u>Twice weekly team 121's with the Operations Manager.</u> These meetings ensure everyone knows what's going on in the wider team and management is certain individuals are managing their workloads in the most efficient manner. The task management system helps during these meetings as we can clearly see everything each team member is doing on their task board.

When managed correctly these meetings don't need to take long, it's all about ensuring that everyone remains focused.

3) <u>On Friday's we have a team celebration.</u> This takes around 45-60 minutes and it's a chance for our remote team to share the positive things they are celebrating that week in their personal lives. This is a get-together rather than a meeting and creates a positive atmosphere, opening up wider communication within the team. It's a chance for a chat and it allows each team member to connect person to person. These snippets of what's going on in each other's lives in a focused time is a healthy and efficient way for a remote team to build their relationships.

4) <u>Once a month we hold a connection meeting</u> where we do a group meditative connection and then share what is happening in our lives with one another on a deeper level than in weekly celebrations. This is an opportunity to connect and share wisdom. It is also a chance for me as a leader to see if I can offer any help and support to my team. The evolution of the business and the team is always best viewed together as these come hand in hand when creating a sustainable business.

5) <u>Once a year I hold in-person get-togethers</u> when I treat my team to experiences to enhance our connection which improves our ability to work together. Last year we met up in Croatia, worked together and had fun in the sunshine. It had a profound effect on the team's connection which enhanced productivity and efficiency.

Marketing my business has and always will be largely via social media channels. I create powerful content with a lot of value, and I share a lot of my personality which creates trust with my audience and enhances the 2-way connection. I have a beautiful and responsive audience, many of whom have been with us for more than 10 years.

Our newest addition to our marketing efforts is our full-time PR Manager. I decided to take this route rather than paying large fees to an outside agency. I wanted someone who was focused solely on my business and was part of the team. The key to successful PR for all businesses, but especially for a niche business like mine, is doing the target audience market research.
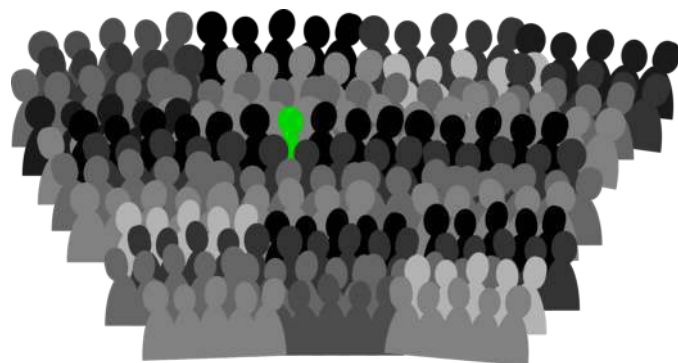
This is a really important part of the process as it ensures that we are targeting the correct media because whilst exposure is good, we need to be certain that we are reaching our target audiences with the correct messages that apply to that particular sector.

As we consider the greater good of humanity within our businesses these are the key aspects that I feel are vitally important to embody as a business leader:

1. To make sure that our business is aligned with humanity's evolution, in the highest service to ALL of humanity. As business owners we hold a lot of power, wealth, influence, and impact, it's therefore crucial that we have the highest good of all at the heart of our business. Whilst our personal fulfillment comes into why we create and run our businesses it should go beyond that because we will never be completely fulfilled unless we put humanity's highest good at the center of it all. I attribute my success to the fact that I do this every day.
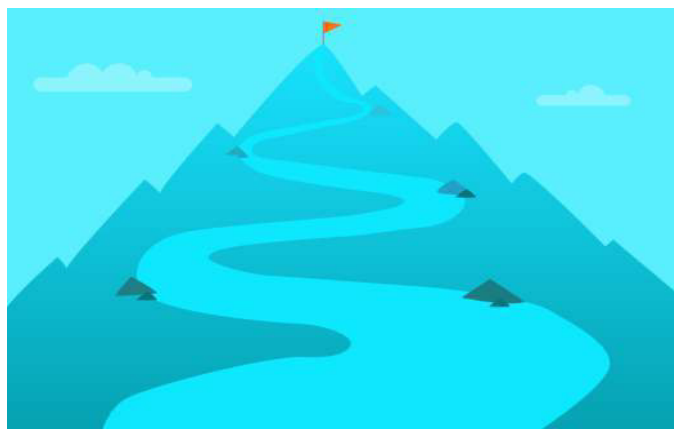
2. Commitment for the business to be an extension of our own evolution and understanding that this is constant. This is a service to everyone who works in the business, to everyone who is impacted by the business and it releases so much pressure because sometimes the way we are conditioned leads the mind to look for instant gratification and we forget the bigger picture OR perhaps don't have it in the first place which becomes stressful and bad for our health.

It's vitally important to see that this is about a lifetime, a legacy, what we do in our businesses today will impact what is going to happen to our children and future generations.

3. Mindset: within our evolution we need to constantly upgrade our mindset and shift any limiting patterns of scarcity and believing in lack which is so common in our world and we have to constantly address those limitations and shift the mindsets so we become truly great leaders because being in an abundance mentality is the key to thriving as leaders.
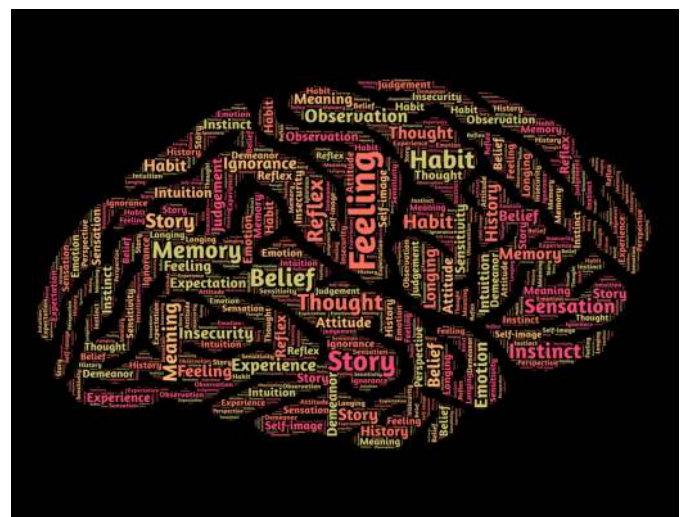
4. Clarity: in the direction, in the vision, holding this and not being impacted by other external factors no matter how big or small. It's normal in business to fail, make mistakes, to be disappointed, to not achieve goals, to hold so much energy that it becomes heavy - this is why clarity is so important and is connected to constant evolution.
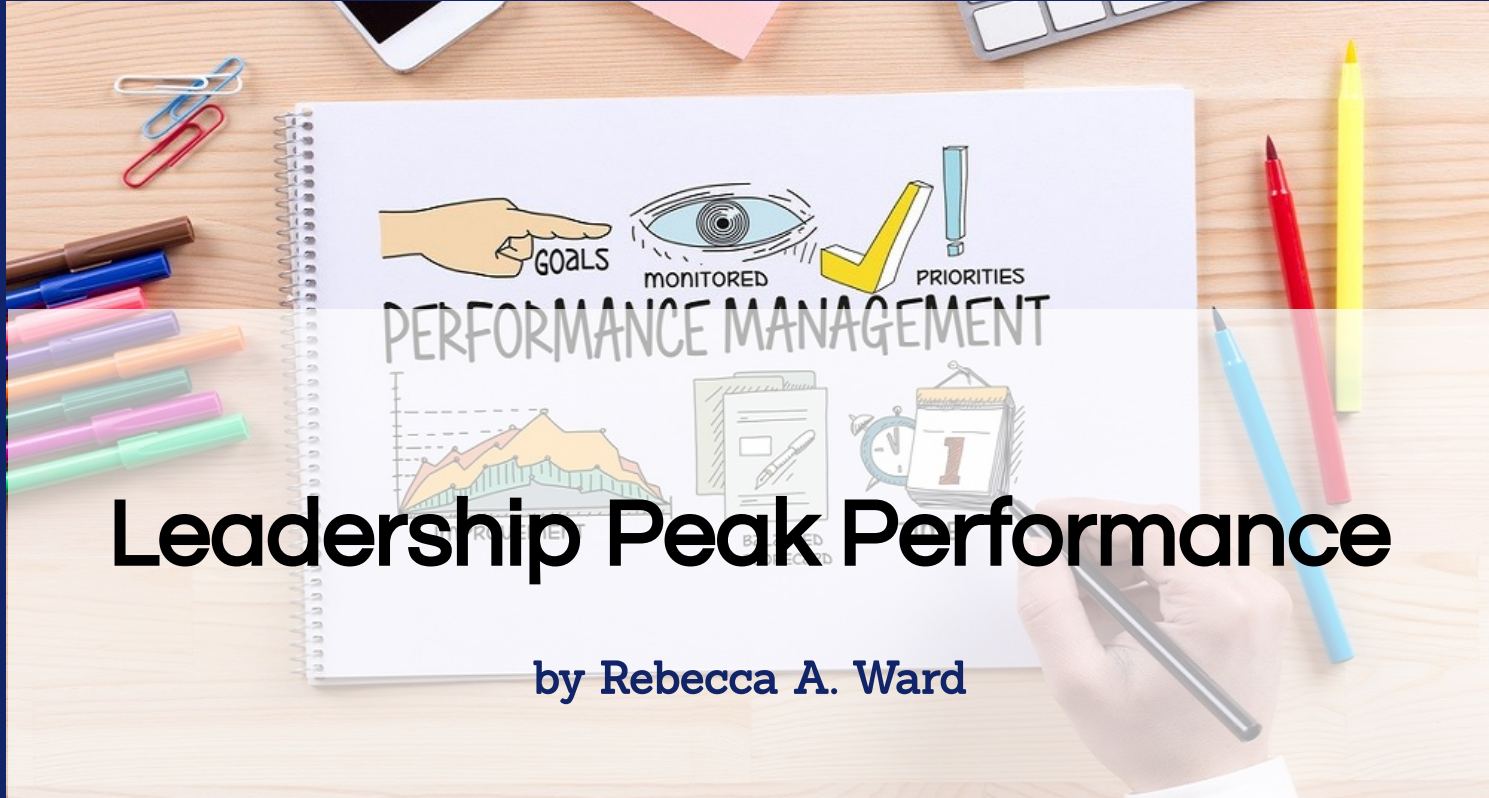
5. Trusting the heart and the values of the heart is most important and they should never be compromised. These are values of connection, kindness, care, compassion and love.

This Article is written by Transformational Leader Sofia Sundari. Sofia is an author, transformational facilitator and spiritual mentor who runs online programs and in-person immersions with a focus on empowered living. In 2021 Sofia and her team celebrated turning over $1 Million and becoming a 7-figure brand. For further information about Sofia and her work visit her website - www.sofiasundari.com.
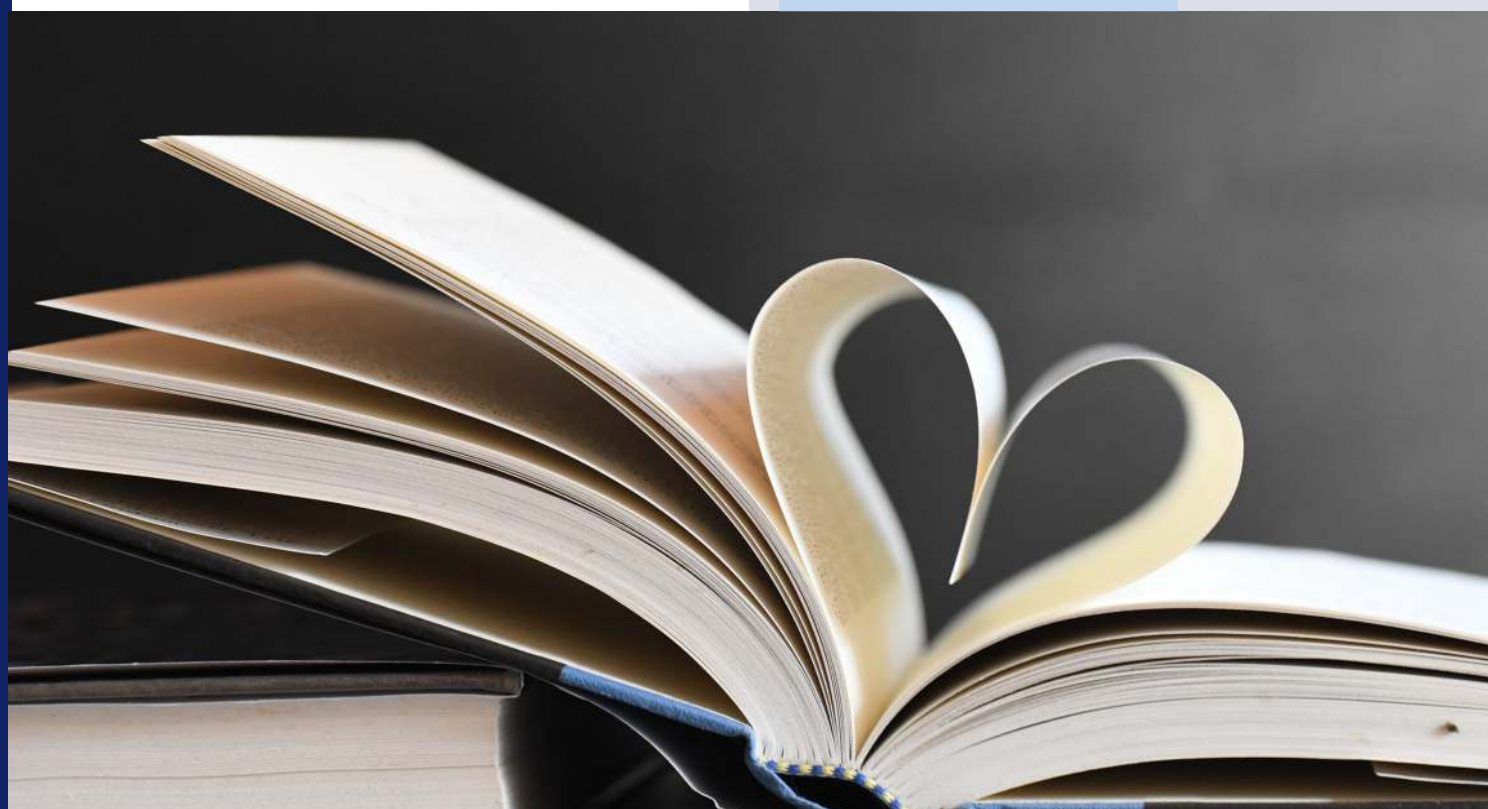
Leadership Peak Performance

by Rebecca A. Ward

Before I became an executive coach, I spent nearly 30 years in management consulting, working for big and small firms. In those years, what I noticed more than anything was how the speed in which we worked continued to increase exponentially. Towards the end of my tenure as a consultant, I began to get curious about whether human beings were truly wired to function at what we call, peak performance.

The notion of peak performance has been bandied about in leadership circles for decades. But what does it really mean to be at peak performance? What does it look like, how do you get there, and how do you sustain it?

Let's take a look at the science.

Our physiology functions in direct opposition to the modern business world. We value intelligence, innovation, creativity, and fast-paced results. All these values rely on the mind to help us achieve our goals with little-to-no attention on how the body responds to these demands.

Human beings still have the same primitive wiring as our ancestors, which often functions as a stress antenna, setting off false alarms and triggering reactivity in our bodies that limits access to the part of our brain where executive functioning thrives. When the nervous system perceives a big stressor, it's communicating with our primitive brain (amygdala) and not our higher-order thinking brain. In those instances, we do not have full access to those values we care so much about.

And yet, our world places little focus on how our bodies function—including, the nervous system—and certainly even less about how much our primitive wiring shapes who we are as leaders. Many of us feel the pressure to outperform the competition, maintaining our productivity at peak performance levels (see Figure 1).

The trouble with attempting to stay in the peak performance range is that we often don't recognize the tipping point—that moment when we override our instincts to slow down. Stress sets in. Fatigue follows. We shut down and the immune system's ability to fight off illness weakens, eventually leading to burnout and even worse, disease.

We think we can keep going and avoid the consequences, but the reality is, when we override our instinct to slow down, we simply aren't effective anymore. It's physiologically impossible to maintain that pace and avoid poor decisions, lose our edge, reduce productivity, and lose our ability to think strategically.

Simply put, human beings are not wired for modern times.

So, how do we change that? How can we stay at peak performance and minimize the risk of tipping towards burnout? We must slow down, pay attention, and listen to our instincts. When we learn how to do that, we can stay in that sweet spot of resilience where the visionary inside us is "in the zone."

Many of my executive clients scoff at the idea of slowing down. What if I lose my edge? How can I stay competitive? Why would I do that and lose my best attributes as a top performer?

Here's my answer:

If you want to continue to accelerate your growth, you need full access to your executive brain. That can only happen if you are in a regulated body. What's more, nervous systems naturally "ping" off each other. When a leader is dysregulated, it often has an impact on their ability to be compelling, confident, and influential. On the contrary, a nervous system that is regulated is contagious. If you are regulated, those around you will feel more at ease, more compelled to listen, and willing to follow you.

So, how do you regulate your nervous system so you can stay in peak performance? Through self-regulation practices which can be achieved in three easy steps:

1. Slow down every day for at least 30 minutes (your speech and your pace of movement). Try long, deep breathing in those 30 minutes (inbreath through the nose, outbreath through the mouth).

2. When you are in the slow-down practice and breathing, pay attention and see if you can start to notice sensations in your body (heart beating, breath entering or leaving your body, gravity underneath you, etc.). If you do, you are present (if you don't, it simply means you need more time).

3. Between practices, start to notice your instincts. When you get a signal from that instinct in your gut, trust it. Don't override what it tells you. It may be time not to act quickly but rather, slow down and make a more thoughtful decision.

Remember:

Peak performance isn't possible to sustain if you don't take time to slow down so that your body-brain connection can catch up. Be thoughtful about pacing when you need to accelerate and when you need to slow down. You'll be far more compelling as a leader and a far better decision-maker.

Rebecca A. Ward, LMFT, SEP, PCC, is the author of The Paper Tiger Syndrome: How to Liberate Yourself from the Illusion of Fear. She is a business consultant and executive coach, author, speaker, and licensed therapist. With more than 25 years of experience as a management consultant and leadership coach, she brings a wealth of knowledge about how stress can erode the health of executives and the organizations in which they lead. For more information, please visit irisinstitute.com and follow Rebecca on Instagram.

Top 8 Characteristics That Define Leadership in Practice

by Shahid Hanif

Managers all around the world are now expected to embody all the characteristics of leaders in their official duties. Leadership is not just a character trait for the CEOs and founders in fact it is now demanded from every person in a position of power.

Leadership in practice entails using one's skills, knowledge, and experience to inspire and guide a group of people toward a common goal or vision. It involves making decisions, setting objectives, communicating effectively, and motivating and empowering others to achieve the desired outcomes. A leader always leads by example rather than mere dictation of what they require their team to achieve.

There's a huge difference between dictators and leaders and people in power need to understand this difference to guide better and lead better.

Leadership in practice, therefore, amounts to a number of practices incorporated into the daily life of a manager, teacher, CEO, founder, and other persons in power.

According to Dalai Lama, leadership requires a genuine concern for the wellness of others. He pointed out three qualities that every leader should embody to become a true leader who inspires everyone in his/her stride. These qualities include mindfulness, selflessness, and compassion.

Moreover, leadership in practice is guided by a lot of skills that help guide a team effectively. It involves building relationships, fostering a positive team culture, and being able to adapt to changing circumstances. Leaders need to be good listeners so that they can provide constructive feedback and support their team members in achieving their individual goals and objectives.

Following are the top 8 leadership qualities every leader should adopt to foster a positive work culture.

1. Mentor Thoughtfully:

Thoughtful mentoring means guiding and supporting the people under your management to perform to the best of their abilities. It involves honing people's skills and talents and giving them the room to perform and shine through their work.

2. Foster Healthy Relationships Instead Of Competitiveness:

Leaders don't promote competitiveness and a spirit of jealousy among their team. Instead, they individually highlight and use every single person's strengths to drive profitable results.

Leaders always keep a healthy relationship with the people they manage in order to inspire them to perform better every single day.

3. Take Chances And Make Wise Decisions:

Leaders always think out of the box and are known to take unconventional decisions and once they make a decision they stand by it no matter what happens. The decision-making powers of a leader need to be staunch and they should make smart and calculated decisions that are the most beneficial.

4. Stand Behind Your Team, Through Thick And Thin:

Leaders are known for their selflessness and their ability to support the people they lead through thick and thin. Leaders don't shy away from taking risks or making mistakes. Therefore, they come with big hearts and own their mistakes, and inculcate the same in the people they mentor. This empowers everyone to foster a productive, safe, and healthy work culture.

LEADERSHIP

5. Offer Constructive Criticism:

Leaders offer real-time feedback to the people they are leading and offer constructive criticism which will help them perform better and understand where they are lacking.

6. Do Not Bash People Or Be Unkind:

Leaders are people who do not bash or be mean to the people below them just because they have less power. Instead, leaders show motherly care and nurture their team to perform better, overcome their shortcomings and perform to the best of their abilities.

7. Trust Your Team:

Leaders show a lot of trust in their team as they understand that everybody has their own skill set according to which they will perform and produce the desired outcomes.

Leaders are not micromanagers who nitpick every flaw of the people they are leading, instead, they are mentors who offer clear guidance and then show trust in their pupils to perform well.

Lastly, leadership in practice means employing all these and many more characteristics in your everyday situations to create a conducive environment of growth for everyone working under your management and mentorship. Leaders have to embody the utmost patience and tolerance to lead and adapt to the qualities and characteristics of the many kinds of people they come across. Last but not the least, the most significant and essential quality of leadership is that leaders lead by example. They walk the talk and show people through their actions how to be more tolerant, forgiving, and accepting of people and their performance.

Top 8 Characteristics That Define Leadership in Practice

1. Mentor Thoughtfully
2. Foster Healthy Relationships Instead Of Competitiveness
3. Take Chances And Make Wise Decisions
4. Stand Behind Your Team, Through Thick And Thin
5. Offer Constructive Criticism
6. Do Not Bash People Or Be Unkind
7. Trust Your Team
8. Do Not Be A Micromanager

Shahid Hanif is CTO and Founded Shufti Pro Ltd - A biometric identity verification solution in 2017 which is now in being used in more than 225 countries and territories by small business, large enterprises, banks, FinTech companies and online retailers. Prior to this I worked as a CTO of Quickbit.eu (Publ.) where me and my team developed this from the first line of code to a successful IPO.

During Organizational Change, Be Mindful of You

by Charles J. Alaimo

So often human resource professionals are concerned more about ensuring the health and well-being of the organization and the team, putting themselves second. I'm constantly called on to solve issues, be a diplomat, resolve conflicts, enable the team, and help people see the path through a challenging time, whether personally or professionally. It's been a deeply rewarding career, but one that comes with a price.

The 2022 Stress in America™ survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association between August 18 and September 2, 2022, among 3,192 adults age 18+ who reside in the U.S. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. In 2022, the top stressors included government and political divisiveness, inflation, and violence. Close to 76% of the respondents said they have experienced health impacts due to stress.

When this survey was conducted in 2020, not surprisingly Covid took center stage in 2020 and found that nearly 8 in 10 adults (78%) stated the coronavirus pandemic is a significant source of stress in their lives, while 3 in 5 (60%) say the number of issues America faces is overwhelming to them.

In 2017, the American Psychological Association released their 2017 Work and Well-Being Survey. The survey covered a myriad of topics, but specific to organizational change and wellness, it noted that workers experiencing recent or current change were more than twice as likely to report chronic work stress, compared with employees who reported no recent, current, or anticipated change (55 percent vs. 22 percent), and more than four times as likely to report experiencing physical health symptoms at work (34 percent vs. 8 percent).

I recall in the days following 9/11 and while I was working down on Wall Street, I invited a psychologist to assist and be available to our employees who were all returning to the office for the first time three weeks after many witnessed the horrific events unfold that day. We were all under stress and I was worried about the team. I recall her comments to me. "You are like a bank; people are coming to you, asking for your help and 'withdrawing' from you. A bank cannot survive if there are only withdrawals and likewise you need to recharge yourself, get 'deposits' back into your bank." That was the first time in my career that someone had used this analogy. But it was so true.

I'm sure many fellow HR leaders have all experienced significant change similar to my experience; from office moves, M&A and post-acquisition integration, new CEO and leadership, financial setbacks, bankruptcy, and from 2018 to 2019 prepping my company at the time for sale

– all while trying to ensure that our people were okay. It was an incredibly busy, and powerfully rewarding period of my life and one that culminated with me leaving my role to recharge and think about the future. My concern during that time was sustainability; having the ongoing energy day in and day out to project an image of control and seeing these initiatives through.

I reached out to Jaymie Meyer, Founder of Resilience for Life®, an ICF PCC & Board-Certified Health & Wellness Coach. Jaymie provides private coaching to individuals seeking a lifestyle change. In addition to coaching work/life balance, she focuses on stress reduction, weight control, and self-care. Through the years and at various organizations, I have invited Jaymie several times to speak to our employees as we were going through times of change. The feedback was always so positive. We reconnected recently to discuss how individuals can take care of themselves during organizational change but also how the pandemic, have impacted employees and individuals.

Starting out, I asked Jaymie what has she seen change since the start of the pandemic that has caused people to reach out to her (burnout, fear). Jaymie responded, "I think because of my particular wheelhouse, the reasons people reach out to me haven't changed radically since COVID because I've always been in the business of lifestyle, work/life harmony, resilience, and stress reduction. If anything has changed, it's that people see the value of integrating the myriad aspects of their lives. During COVID, for those working at home, the distinction between work-life and home life became blurred. Setting healthy boundaries became a major challenge. How can we fulfill our responsibilities as an employee, partners, and parents and still be true to ourselves?" Jaymie went on to say, "People began to understand that the less they compartmentalize the various parts of themselves, the more energized, healthy and successful they feel."

For me it was good to hear that the reasons haven't necessarily changed pre-and-post-pandemic. I went on to ask Jaymie if there were any tips in her toolbox that she has found which have had the greatest possible impact on the individuals that she's coaching and working with.
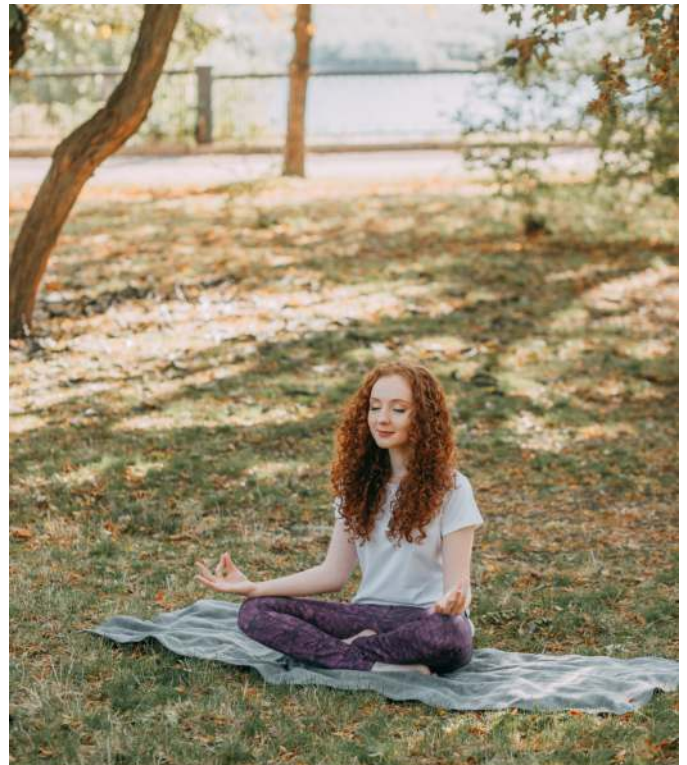
Jaymie spoke of the age-old contemplative practices of meditation, breathing, and mindfulness. "There are many different approaches. I never apply my idea of what might work for somebody." Jaymie first explores to see if her clients have any experience with contemplative practices, and many do. "Interestingly, many people enjoyed meditation in the past, but then their mind got busy and they thought they weren't doing it right, and when I explain that that's what the mind is designed to do, it's a great relief. In the West we erroneously think the mind is going to flip off like a light switch during practice, but it doesn't work that way.

Mindfulness and meditation come in many flavors. Some people may have been given a Sanskrit mantra by a teacher, some people may have a strong Judeo-Christian background and prefer to repeat a Psalm or a prayer that has meaning for them. Others prefer to work with the breath. It's all good. It's important to find out what works for the individual."

In my own experience, the following tips have helped me a great deal. They are all geared to self-care during times of stress and organizational change.

Recharge

Give yourself time to recharge and re-energize. Being constantly connected drains our ability to rest and clear our minds. One simple tip that I started doing on the weekends is leaving my phone at home so that I am not tempted or distracted. After all, I'm usually with my family and these are the most important people in my life. Also, take your time. Americans not only receive less vacation days as compared to Europe, but a 2017 U.S. Travel Association's Project Time Off study showed 52 percent who left vacation on the table accumulated 705 million unused days last year, up from 662 million days the year before.

Be Present

Train yourself to be in the moment and turn your mind off to the things you need to do at work tomorrow, or on Monday. Live in the moment. There has been increased awareness of 'mindfulness' which now seems to be the new buzzword, but it is true. Learn to appreciate the here and now. Time is fleeting and those we love will not be around forever, don't miss those moments. I train myself to remember the smells, the weather, and the feelings of the here and now.

Re-Energize

Train yourself to be in the moment and turn your mind off to the things you need to do at work tomorrow, or on Monday. Live in the moment. There has been increased awareness of 'mindfulness' which now seems to be the new buzzword, but it is true. Learn to appreciate the here and now. Time is fleeting and those we love will not be around forever, don't miss those moments. I train myself to remember the smells, the weather, and the feelings of the here and now.

Reflect

The workday can be a crazy chaotic mess. If you are like me, you can often be enveloped by that one thing you did wrong rather than all the great things that happened during the day. Take a balanced approach on how you are able to contribute to others and give yourself a well-deserved pat on the back.

Reconnect

Our lives are hectic and often we are so tired from the week we have little time to meet friends or even family. Reconnecting and keeping key relationships alive takes work but it pays off immensely. Reconnect with people who are supportive, who are insightful, who give you peace of mind and whose advice you value. Accept that invite and go grab that cup of coffee! Reconnecting means different things for different people.

Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

While we all gravitate towards the familiar, there is no better feeling than achieving something that you would not have ordinarily done had you been in your comfort zone. 2019 provided me an opportunity to reinvent myself. Yes, it was scary (thinking about leaving my job) but I learned so much about myself and my capabilities in the process. And it gave me the time to focus on writing this book!

Volunteer

When Jaymie and I were speaking about isolation exacerbated by the pandemic and what individuals can do to feel connected, to have the human interaction, she recommended volunteerism. "It may seem counterintuitive when you feel lonely but it's extraordinary how the act of extending yourself to somebody in need can lift your spirits. There are many ways to make yourself of service. Whether joining an organization that asks you to make a birthday call to a senior once a month; dropping off food to a homebound individual (like the Meals on Wheels program); helping maintain a public garden; or volunteering at a local animal shelter, the list is endless.

I recommend people search online to find volunteer opportunities in their community."

> "To ease another's heartache is to forget one's own."
> — Abraham Lincoln

Display Gratitude

Taking the time to recognize and be grateful for where you are is tough. It's easier to compare ourselves against others who we may think are more successful. Appreciating how far you have come is so important. I am grateful every day for my family, my health, and having a role where I can contribute to my company's growth and helping others achieve success. Showing gratitude is just as important. A simple 'thank you' has more power than some realize and it's amazing just how infrequently we say those two words. Take the time to recognize those who are important in your life. It's amazing what you will learn about yourself in the process.

Be Self-Compassionate

This was a tip that came out of my discussion with Jaymie. I always thought it would be a bit selfish or self-indulgent to take the time for you. However, Jaymie changed my mind. She shared the following, "One thing that I think is applicable for everybody is the practice of self-compassion. Often the people I work with are high-achievers and in spite of being at the top of their game, it's surprisingly common to see a lack of self-compassion. People often feel it's indulgent. Whether stemming from cultural beliefs, or a by-product of a strong work ethic, it's essential to remember that self-compassion is not self-indulgent. In fact, it can help you be more empathetic, successful and healthy."

Understand What Change Means for You

Bottom line. Don't lose yourself in whatever change your organization is undertaking. Understand how you will be affected by the change, who will be there to have your back, and sometimes coming to the realization that the only option would be to walk away can be liberating. We are each different, and the way we choose to deal with daily stress can also vary. While sometimes these tips are easier said than done, like everything else, it's a mindset and a discipline. Just find what works for you and go for it.

Resources

With over 30 years of experience, Charles J. Alaimo has overseen all global HR processes including performance management, policy development, recruiting, learning and development, and has worked closely with organizations' Board of Directors. He is a self-proclaimed global citizen with a high degree of cultural awareness and sensitivity. Charles holds a Master's degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from Baruch College, where he also received his undergraduate degree in Human Resources Management. Charles recently published "HR Leadership During Bankruptcy and Organizational Change," which is available on Amazon.com and Springer Publishing.

What Does Practical Leadership Look Like in Tough Times?

by Laura Terrell

In a post-COVID world, the workplace needs leaders who can guide, direct and support their employees in genuine, concrete ways. Professionals also want leaders who demonstrate in both their words and actions that they value their employees and the work that they do. Why? Because many people feel disconnected from their leadership, and even from what is going on in their organizations after several years of working in a less-connected environment with numerous challenges.
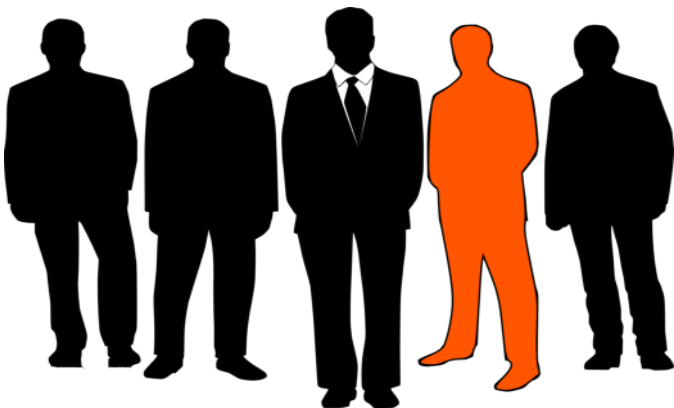
So, what do great leaders do that sets them apart when faced with the need to help their employees re-connect and re-engage?

They focus on taking meaningful steps that are visible and make a difference to the people they lead, including:

Recognizing people other than themselves, and publicly attributing accomplishments to those professionals

Too often, leaders describe their team or company's achievements in terms of what the leader has done. But a stronger and more compelling way of highlighting success is through sharing examples of those who have been key in getting there.

For example, GSK CEO Emma Walmsley recently introduced a new video series, shared both within the company and externally, intended to "shine a spotlight on innovation and the people who make it happen." Her latest conversation included a data management quality lead, an engineer, and a manufacturing apprentice, talking about how they lead, learn, and make a difference in their company. Putting the focus on others is a great way of sharing specifics around the importance of individual contributions.

Communicating honestly and openly about tough issues

When Bob Iger, the former CEO of Disney, returned to the company in 2022, it was clear that he had been re-hired to make changes. But rather than letting people wonder what those changes might be, Iger has been up front about many of them, even when they might be unpopular with some employees: e.g., announcing that he was not reversing a decision to move several thousand jobs from California to Florida, and requiring hybrid workers to return to the office four days each week.

He also announced those decisions after holding town hall meetings, seeking input, explaining his reasoning, and acknowledging that "we're not going to make everyone happy all the time, and we're not going to try to." Not every decision is an easy or popular one, but bringing people into the decision-making process and being transparent with them goes a long way to building trust in leaders.

Supporting and empowering individuals and teams to do their best work

Believing in your people and showing them that you do, even in the face of significant risk, is a critical aspect of real leadership. Katherine Graham inherited the leadership of her family's publishing company in the 1960s, never having expected to take on that role. She knew that she needed smart editors and reporters, and focused on hiring the right people who could transform the Washington Post, and ultimately move it from being a regional newspaper to world-wide recognition as a leading news source. When the paper's journalists came to her with stories detailing the political scandal of Watergate and the evidence of the Pentagon Papers showing that the U.S. government had misled the public about the war in Vietnam,

she considered carefully the risks of publishing, including that it would involve defying federal court orders. Yet the leaders who can avoid blaming others, or deflecting attention from their role in the downsizing, are the ones that demonstrate that they are aware of the responsibility that they hold. By admitting that they are human and err like everyone else, they become more authentic and real to the people they are leading.

Acknowledging mistakes and taking responsibility for them

Acknowledging mistakes and taking responsibility for them – It's easy to blame the economy, political issues, or market trends when a decision goes awry and employees lose trust in a leader. Harder still is for leaders to admit that they personally screwed up. But in 2022, when Twilio announced the beginning of substantial layoffs, CEO Jeff Lawson began his announcement to employees by saying "I'm not going to sugarcoat things," and admitting that the company had grown too quickly "without enough focus on our most important company priorities. I take responsibility for those decisions, as well as the difficult decision to do this layoff."

Rebuilding from a workforce reduction takes time, and it isn't easy. Yet the leaders who can avoid blaming others, or deflecting attention from their role in the downsizing, are the ones that demonstrate that they are aware of the responsibility that they hold. By admitting that they are human and err like everyone else, they become more authentic and real to the people they are leading.
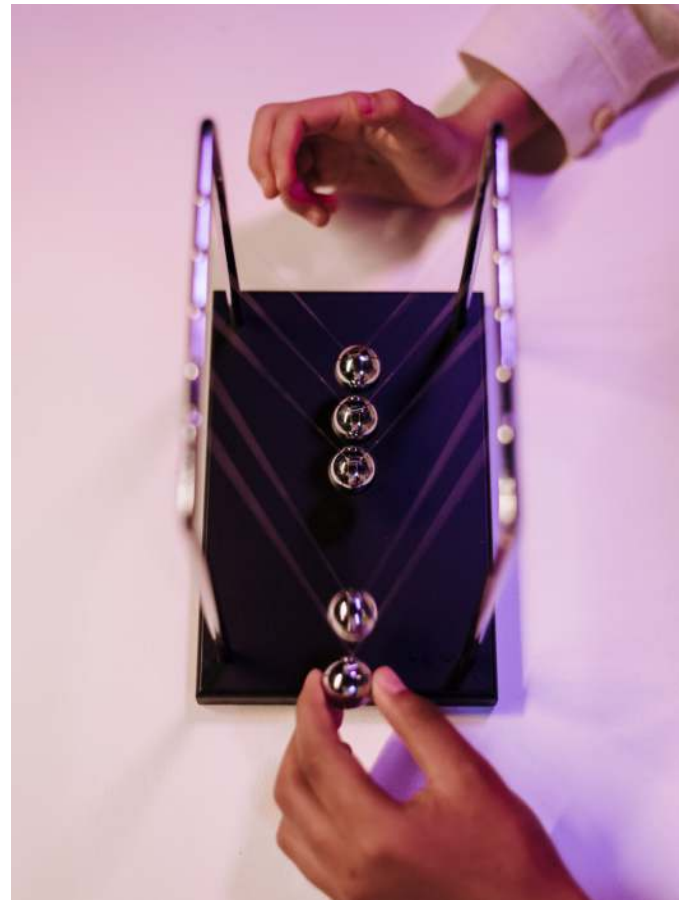
If you're a leader in your organization seeking to motivate it and move it forward, tangible and practical actions are key. It's not enough to speak about the things that matter. You have to apply them in your daily work so that people can see evidence of how they matter in their companies. As we all continue to adapt to new ways of working and different methods of engaging, the consequences of real-world leadership are all the more important.

Practical Leaders Look Like:

- Recognizing people other than themselves, and publicly attributing accomplishments to those professionals

- Communicating honestly and openly about tough issues

- Supporting and empowering individuals and teams to do their best work

- Acknowledging mistakes and taking responsibility for them

Laura Terrell is an executive coach with over twenty-five years of experience as a legal and business leader. She offers an insider's perspective for business, legal and corporate professionals, working to help her clients to improve and achieve success in their work lives. Prior to coaching, she was a Special Assistant to the President at the White House, a senior-level appointee at the U.S. Department of Justice, and an equity partner in two large, global law firms. Laura has also led and managed teams of people across multiple countries, serving as a top advisor to many Fortune 500 and FTSE 100 companies. Partnering with her clients, she enjoys helping them reach their goals and build confidence in their careers. www.lauraterrell.com.

Best Practices for Leading in a Hybrid Work Environment

by Kara Davidson and
Stephanie Judd

We recently hosted a roundtable discussion on Building Authentic Sales Relationships in a Hybrid Virtual/In-Person Tech Industry. Additionally, we continue to do a great deal of executive coaching for leaders in public health, tech and other fields. There are several unique challenges leaders are facing in supporting their people right now due to the hybrid nature of work and offer these best practices for consideration.

Foster Mindfulness in Yourself and Employees

This has been a best practice at work for a while but is increasingly important when folks are approaching burnout,

distracted from all sides and stuck in a cycle with too many meetings. Mindfulness is an incredibly important practice for leaders. It isn't merely starting to meditate. It's about supporting a proactive and strategic mindset instead of a reactive one, being truly present at meetings, and meeting people where they are. Perhaps above all, mindful leadership is acknowledging and supporting your boundaries and the boundaries of your employees.

Be Flexible About How You Connect With Your Team

Not every call has to be a video call. Phone calls can feel like a refreshing change and can be a better medium for certain types of calls. Pay attention to how your employees are feeling and ask them for their preferences.

While video calls are helpful when you want to get to know someone, put a face to a name and get the benefit of non-verbal communication, phone calls also have their advantages. For example, on a phone call, participants won't be distracted by their own image on the screen and can better focus on the content of the conversation. Additionally, phone calls offer a bit of movement freedom, allowing folks an opportunity to turn the meeting into a walking meeting. This is good for body, heart and mind!

Experiment with New Ways for Team Building

Team building used to show up in a few common forms - the welcome lunch for new employees, the occasional happy hours or Friday Pizzas, and the annual all-company retreat. All these activities typically asked employees to leave their desks to participate, and therefore cost the company a significant amount of worktime.

Today, many offices remain completely or at least partially virtual. Time feels like it's even more precious than it was before, and virtual or hybrid events can feel like longer and sub-par experiences.
Stop waiting for things to return to the way they were and stop preferencing

in-person folks. Experiment with alternatives to the old ways of team building. There's not going to be a one-size-fits-all solution, so aim for variety. Perhaps your Welcome Lunches become virtual coffees. Perhaps you offer employees an opportunity to participate in an activity local to them and then share stories with the team later. Brainstorm with your team for ideas, too! They'll certainly have ideas for how to engage them!

Find Ways to Debrief and Coach your Team Members

In the days of dominantly in-person work, leaders could observe their team members in action, picking up on non-verbal cues, noticing the impact of their actions in the moment, and more. Then, they had the opportunities between meetings and in ad hoc "hey, do you have a minute?" moments to offer coaching, encouragement, and advice.

For folks who travel for work, these moments are often immediately after the big client meeting on the way to the airport or while waiting for a flight

In the virtual and hybrid worlds, these moments are much fewer and farther between.

You may feel like you are accessible to your team because you told them you have an "open door policy," but it's easy for people to feel isolated or like they're a burden if they have to ask for unscheduled time. How do you fight against this trend? Consider establishing "Office Hours" during which time you encourage your employees to interrupt you with anything. Plan a mid-day walk, grab your phone, and do ad hoc check-ins. Come up with a routine that serves you and your team and stick to it.

As the pandemic becomes endemic, we have to consider new ways of working. Employees and leaders want to hold onto some of the flexibility and autonomy that comes with working virtually, but they also want to feel connected to and valued by their organizations.

What best practices can you share for leading today?

Kara Davidson and Stephanie Judd are the founders of Wolf & Heron, a leadership development firm that leverages expertise in social psychology, influence, and facilitation to develop leaders who can effectively engage and inspire others. We offer customized, people-focused programs, such as corporate training, public workshops, and executive coaching. Our clients transcend organizational profiles; we work with Fortune 100 companies to startups, small non-profits to large educational institutions. Our founders, Kara Davidson and Stephanie Judd, have over 40 years of combined experience developing and delivering solutions that are guaranteed to inspire.

Your Biggest Leadership Hurdle: 4 Tips for Navigating Impostor Syndrome

by Kara Davidson and Stephanie Judd

At Wolf & Heron, we do a lot of one-on-one work with leaders through our coaching practice. Most of the time, these leaders, although well established in their careers, still believe they have more to accomplish professionally; they haven't reached their end-goal, and their ambition remains strong.

And yet, despite their previous achievements and successful careers, we find ourselves having conversation after conversation helping leaders see and feel their own potential for that next step. We've noticed that one of the key hurdles of leaders stepping into their own leadership is their personal belief that they're not yet ready.

One coachee, we'll call her Lisa, was offered a new role in division leadership. She came to a session with Stephanie with the goal of thinking through whether or not she should take the job. Her main reason not to? She might fail, especially in the beginning when she would be figuring things out.

Another coachee, we'll call him Paul, came to Kara with the desire to think through an opportunity to lead a working group of leaders from a plethora of non-profit organizations. His main reason not to? The leaders were intimidating, and he didn't feel comfortable facilitating them through a working session when he didn't feel at the same level of authority as he perceived the members of the working group to be.

Lisa and Paul's challenges, and similar conundrums of many of our coachees, are known as Impostor Syndrome. Imposter syndrome is not merely an affliction of the truly inexperienced or those starting a new career. Imposter syndrome is something that leaders at all levels navigate.

According to Wikipedia, impostor syndrome (also known as impostor phenomenon, fraud syndrome, or the impostor experience) is a concept describing individuals who are marked by an inability to internalize their accomplishments and a persistent fear of being exposed as a "fraud." According to Sakulku and Alexander, (International Journal of Behavioral Science), 70% of people experience some form of imposter syndrome in their lives.

Fear is a normal human emotion and its existence makes sense when you think about it… Large predator? Run! Food stores getting low? I could starve. I must work hard to prepare for winter! While fear is evolutionarily designed to keep us alive, it's important to not let it prevent us from fully stepping into the leadership we can (and should) embody.

The fear of being found out as inadequate will prevent you from trying, taking on new things, or speaking of yourself in a way that conveys confidence and inspires opportunity. And yet… to build credibility and expertise, you're gonna have to do those things. It's a vicious circle, but we all have to deal with it. Here are a few tips for how to prevent this invisible roadblock from stalling your leadership journey.

1. Check-in with Yourself

When you're presented with an opportunity that feels out of your reach, stay aware of your feelings. If you notice self-doubt creep in, simply label it. Just by doing that, the fear will already be more manageable. Then, once it's named, your thinking around how to address it will be more open-minded and creative than outright avoiding the opportunity that scares you.

As we consider the greater good of humanity within our businesses these are the key aspects that I feel are vitally important to embody as a business leader:

2. Reframe Your Thinking

Treat the Challenge as a Step, and Not the Endgame. Reframing opportunities as a step on the road to something even bigger helps in two ways. First, it makes the step right in front of you suddenly a lot smaller by comparison. Second, it helps you see the step in front of you as a learning opportunity that is part of a journey rather than the culmination of your entire career and lifetime.

"Anna" came to Stephanie nervous about an internal job interview for a promotion her boss recommended she try for. She had doubts about whether she'd get the job and was afraid that she was going to bomb the interview.

They worked together to reframe this interview as a step on a long journey to becoming a skilled interviewee. This was just one opportunity to practice, reflect, and learn. By the time she left the session, she was excited to practice interviewing because one day she planned to be the public relations face of her organization, and this was just one way for her to hone her skills. Whether or not she landed the job became a lot less central to her experience.

3. Seek Outside Perspectives

This is probably where we help the most as coaches to our clients. Clients share their doubts, and we give them a pep talk, act as a sounding board, and help them see the opportunity rather than the risk. Find friends, mentors, and colleagues who can do this for you, and you'll have a great set of weapons around you to combat impostor syndrome.

4. Take A Step

Sometimes impostor syndrome shows up as procrastination. You want to do it, you plan to do it, but every time you sit down to do it, you think to yourself that maybe tomorrow would be a better day to start. Instead, eat the frog.

"Lindsay" came to a session with the big question of whether or not to apply for a fellowship opportunity. She wasn't sure she wanted to apply; it was far away, and would be a year-long commitment, and after all, there was a decent chance she wouldn't get it anyway. But listening to her speak about what the fellowship could mean indicated to Stephanie how excited she was about the possibility. Upon some probing, Lindsay realized that applying didn't mean officially accepting the offer… it was just one step, after all. Even if it didn't work out, she knew she'd learn something in the process that would set her up better for next time.

Taking a step—even a small one—towards something that excites and scares you can be enough to get the ball rolling and build momentum. Keep taking the next step that is in front of you and try not to think about how scary the bigger picture or goal is.
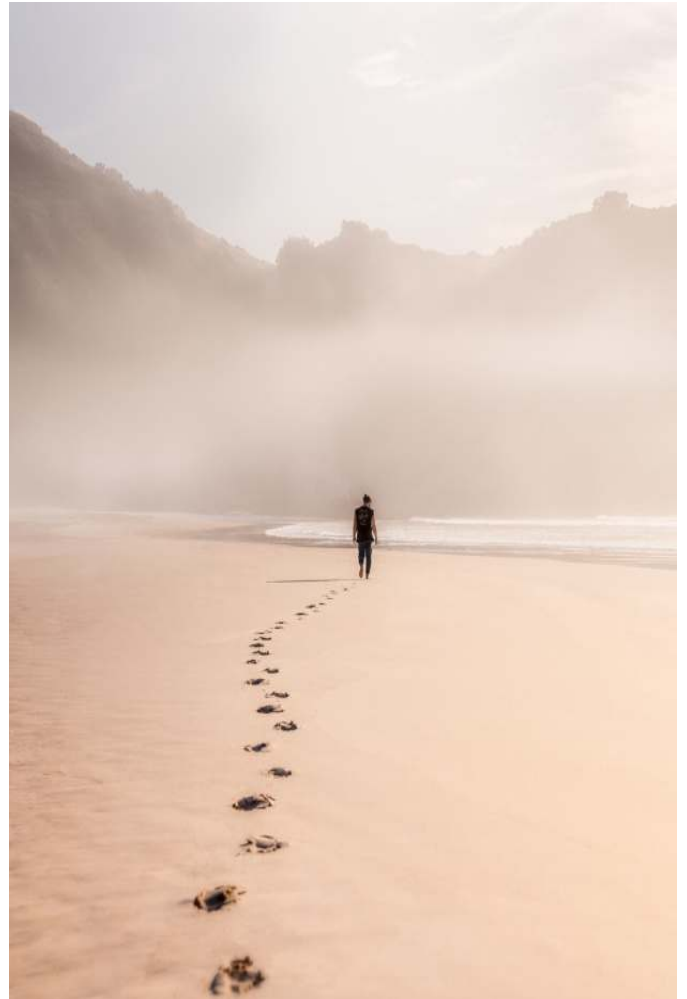
All of these tips require that the leader in question have the time, space and mental energy required to reflect and not just react. If you're struggling to do this on your own, consider partnering with a colleague for some peer coaching, or bring in an external coach to create a system of accountability to help you move forward.

What other strategies do you use to combat impostor syndrome?

Navigating Impostor Syndrome:

1. Check in with Yourself

2. Reframe Your Thinking

3. Seek Outside Perspectives

4. Take A Step

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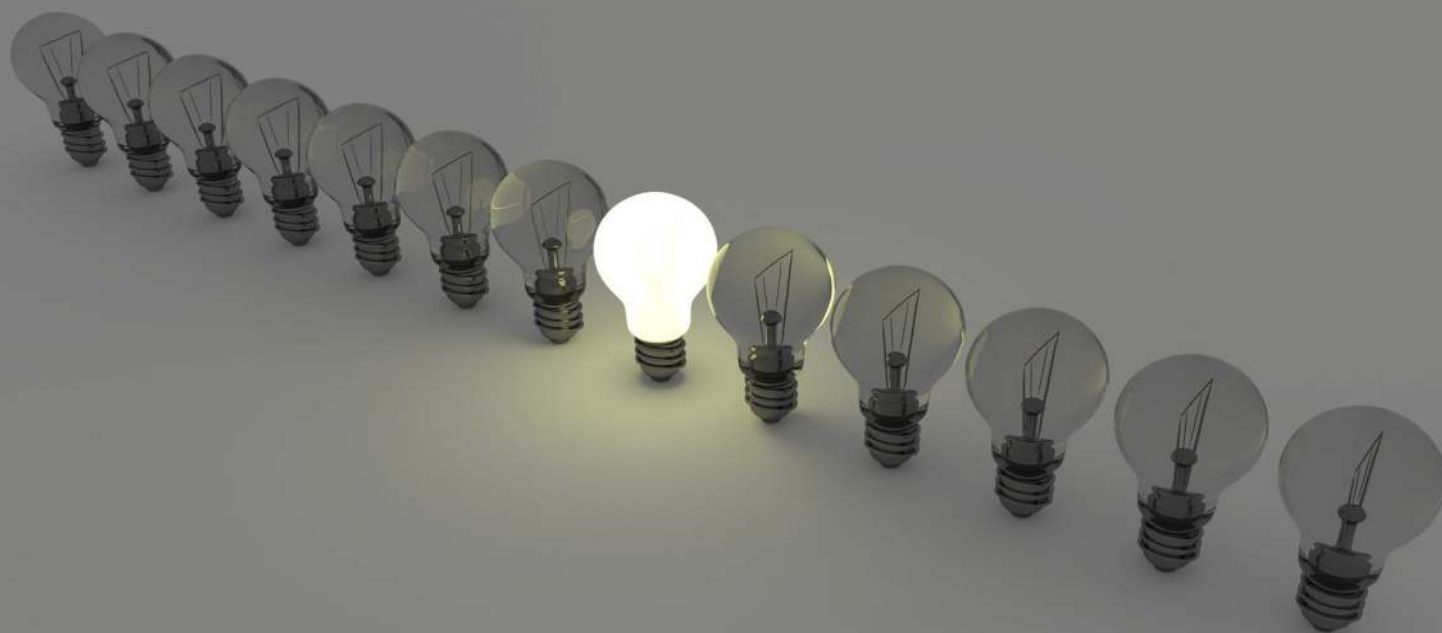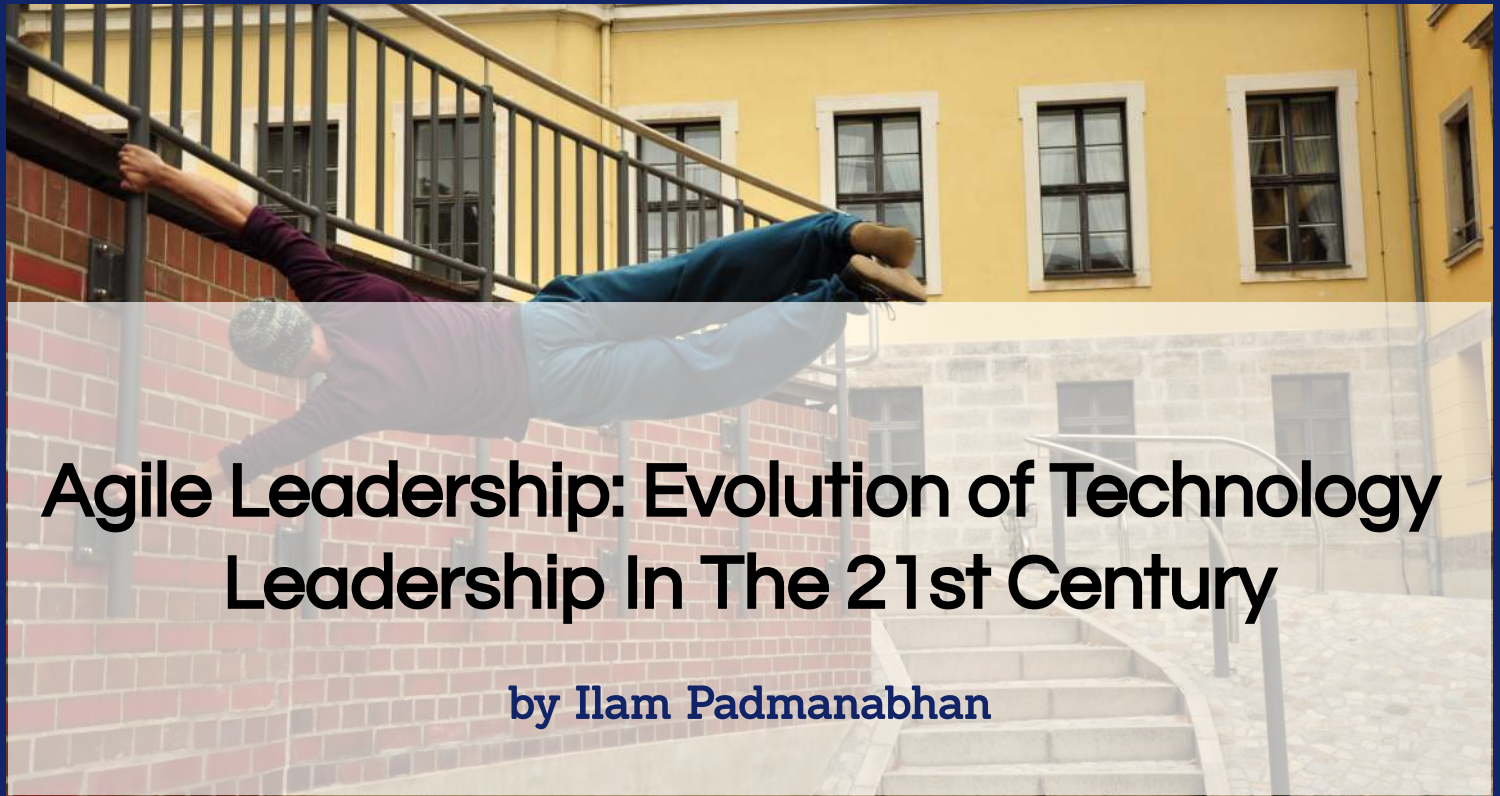
Agile Leadership: Evolution of Technology Leadership In The 21st Century

by Ilam Padmanabhan

What is Agile Leadership?

Software engineering has taken over the world, and it's safe to say that the software industry runs everything. Technology has transformed every aspect of our lives, and the change is only getting faster. We have seen leaders like Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, and Mark Zuckerberg setting the tone for technology leadership, and they are considered icons of innovation, disruption, and success.

However, things have changed, and the traditional command and control model of leadership is no longer the primary model for technology teams. Agile leadership has taken over, and scrum masters are the leaders that run technology teams.

Agile methodology is a flexible and iterative approach to software development that emphasizes collaboration, adaptability, and continuous improvement.

This approach is different from the traditional command and control model because it empowers teams to work together to solve problems and make decisions, with a focus on delivering value to customers.

Agile methodology is based on the principles of servant leadership (also called as lean agile leadership in Scaled Agile), where the leader serves the needs of the team and the customer. Servant leaders focus on creating a culture of trust, collaboration, and empowerment, where team members are encouraged to take ownership of their work and contribute their ideas and insights to the project.

Agility as a Catalyst for Cultural Change in Leadership

Agile methodology has not only revolutionized the way technology teams work, but it has also had a significant impact on the culture of leadership in organizations. The servant leadership model that is inherent in agile methodology emphasizes collaboration, empathy, and a focus on serving the needs of the team and the customer. This is a stark contrast to the traditional command and control model of leadership that has been prevalent in organizations for decades.

As more organizations adopt agile methodology and servant leadership, we can expect to see a cultural shift in the way leadership is perceived and practiced. This shift will likely lead to more empathetic leaders who prioritize communication, collaboration, and continuous improvement, which can lead to more innovative solutions and better outcomes for customers.

Moreover, agile methodology encourages a culture of transparency and openness, where team members are encouraged to speak up and share their ideas and insights. This creates an environment where everyone's contributions are valued, leading to a more inclusive and diverse workplace. As organizations continue to embrace agility and servant leadership, we can expect to see a positive impact on the culture of leadership, resulting in more effective and empathetic leaders.

The Benefits of Agile Leadership in Technology

Agile leadership benefits technology growth in many ways, some examples below:

Increased Productivity

Agile methodology enables teams to work more efficiently by breaking down work into smaller, manageable tasks and delivering incremental value to customers. This can lead to faster project completion times and higher productivity overall.

Faster time-to-market

Agile methodology emphasizes frequent delivery of working software, allowing organizations to quickly respond to changing market conditions and customer needs. This can help businesses stay ahead of the competition and deliver products or services to market faster.

Improved Customer Satisfaction

Agile methodology puts a strong focus on customer collaboration and delivering value to customers. By involving customers in the development process and delivering incremental value, organizations can ensure that they are meeting customer needs and expectations, resulting in higher satisfaction levels.

Reduced Risk

Agile methodology allows for regular feedback and course correction, helping to mitigate risk and avoid costly mistakes. By delivering working software in small increments, organizations can catch and fix issues early on, reducing the risk of larger problems later in the development process.

Improved Employee Morale

Agile methodology promotes a culture of collaboration, transparency, and continuous improvement. When people are part of the process, they tend to be more engaged than when being just managed.

By embracing agile leadership and servant leadership principles, organizations in the technology industry can enjoy these benefits and more, ultimately leading to greater success in today's fast-paced and ever-changing business landscape.

Learning about agility is critical to building a career in tech. With the rise of agile methodology, many tech companies are looking for professionals who are well-versed in agile leadership and scrum methodology. As such, understanding agile principles and practices is becoming increasingly important for those looking to pursue a career in technology.

In addition, many tech professionals find that adopting agile methodology helps them to work more effectively and efficiently, leading to greater job satisfaction and career success. By embracing agile principles and practices, individuals can develop the skills and mindset necessary to become effective leaders in the rapidly evolving tech industry.

Remember:

Agile methodology is a flexible and iterative approach to software development that emphasizes collaboration, adaptability, and continuous improvement.

By embracing agile leadership and servant leadership principles, organizations in the technology industry can enjoy these benefits and more, ultimately leading to greater success in today's fast-paced and ever-changing business landscape.

Ilam Padmanabhan, founder of Ilampadman.com, has 20 years of experience in the Tech/Financial services industry. During his tenure, he's had the pleasure of helping many professionals reach their potential by teaching them how to navigate through complex phases of their careers, develop skills, and leverage technology.

It is his passion to empower people with the knowledge they need to reach their ambitions and create meaningful lives – both professionally and personally.

13 Unconventional Competencies of a Great Leader

by Evgeny Bik

In today's world, there is no shortage of books and articles offering advice on how to become a great leader. From serving your team to demonstrating emotional intelligence or navigating remote work, the options are endless. However, much of this advice fails to address the real-world challenges faced by leaders in the trenches who must manage teams every day without the luxury of inventing the next big thing.

As a seasoned manager with experience at some of the world's most prestigious companies, including Amazon, I can attest that traditional leadership literature often overlooks critical competencies necessary for success in everyday leadership. This article challenges the conventional corporate narrative surrounding essential leadership qualities and introduces The 13 Unconventional Competencies of A Great Leader. I believe these competencies essential for great leaders to be successful with teams on the ground and offer a fresh approach to becoming an influential leader.

What Makes a Great Leader?

Is a successful leader solely defined by exceeding sales targets, low turnover rates, or being recognized in prestigious lists? The best leaders are those who teams would elect to lead them if there ever was an open vote. These leaders don't rely on power or vested authority, but rather attract others to follow them voluntarily. So, what are the 13 unconventional competencies of a great leader? Let's find out.

The 13 Competencies of a Great Leader

1. Great leaders prioritize the greater good over personal gain

They aim to make a lasting impact, rather than achieving short-term gains, power or status. Their commitment to improving the world extends beyond the workplace and into their personal lives. Great leaders radiate commitment, selflessness, and a long-term perspective, which in turn inspire a positive attitude in others. As a leader, your goal should be to make the world a better place, not to enhance your place in the world.

2. Great leaders are willing to be convinced

Leaders who refuse to consider new ideas can quickly become a bottleneck for their team. It's essential for leaders to be open to changing their minds, encouraging the flow of ideas and empowering their teams to take risks. Though not every idea will be a success, fostering a culture of creativity and innovation can lead to breakthroughs.

3. Great leaders act with humility

The misconception that humility equates to meekness and lack of assertiveness is common in corporate leadership. However, real humility is recognizing that you, as a human being, are fallible and irrational, just like everyone else. Humility is not solely about admitting your mistakes but also demonstrating this quality visibly to your team. Leaders who prioritize their status and recognition over everything else often create a toxic work environment, while acting with genuine humility attracts excellent talent and generates outstanding ideas.

4. Great leaders are a positive force in their team's lives

Leadership is often associated with achieving goals and driving results. But at its core, true leadership is about making the world a better place, starting with the people within your organization. To achieve this, leaders must build relationships and take a genuine interest in the lives of their team members. This creates a positive and optimistic environment that inspires consistent and voluntary excellence. When leaders view their team members as more than just transactional resources, they foster a culture of success and fulfillment.

5. Great leaders focus on collaboration, not competition

Corporate competition is often hailed as the key to success, but in reality, a collaborative approach can lead to superior outcomes. Great leaders understand the value of teamwork and idea-sharing, and prioritize creating an environment that fosters these practices. Rather than focusing on outdoing one another, teams that build on each other's ideas are more likely to generate high-quality outcomes. To achieve this, leaders must act without a vested ego and cultivate an atmosphere of trust, where everyone's contributions are valued. Ultimately, fostering a collaborative environment is not just a nice-to-have, but a necessity for long-term business success.

6. Great leaders are decisive

Decisiveness is key to leadership. In a world of uncertainty and risk, leaders must be able to make tough calls, allocate resources, and turn ideas into reality. Indecisiveness is the enemy of progress, hindering motivated teams and causing frustration. Great leaders understand the importance of making decisions while keeping progress at the forefront, facilitating rather than obstructing progress. They know that progress sometimes requires rejection and a return to the drawing board, which they handle with fairness and respect.

7. Great leaders are candid and transparent

Transparency and candor are fundamental to effective leadership. Transparency involves openness and honesty in sharing information, intentions, and actions. Candor, on the other hand, entails being frank, direct, and truthful, especially in difficult conversations. Great leaders must strike a balance between being too direct or vague, rude or manipulative, and conflict-averse or aggressive. To be effective, leaders must be clear about their values, goals, and expectations, and build a culture of trust and transparency where everyone feels safe to speak up and learn from each other.

8. Great leaders delegate the best work

Great leaders go beyond delegating tasks, they delegate the projects they would rather do themselves. This approach is rooted in the understanding that a leader's job is not to benefit themselves, but to make the world a better place. By offering engaging and impactful projects to their team, they allow their members to utilize their full potential, benefiting both the individual and the organization as a whole.

9. Great leaders radiate calmness

In the tumultuous world of work, great leaders turn chaos into clarity. They simplify complexity, create clarity amidst the fog and calm heated emotions.

10. Great leaders act with authenticity

Authenticity is key to effective leadership. Leaders who try to project a false image risk losing the trust of their team. This will lead to demotivation, poor performance, and a decline in the quality of ideas. Authenticity is hard to define but easy to spot, and those who lack it will struggle to lead effectively. To build a strong team, leaders must be true to themselves.

11. Great leaders are patient

Great leaders know that success is a marathon, not a sprint. They understand the value of patience, recognizing that progress can be slow and setbacks are part of the journey. They also know that people progress at different rates and provide them with the necessary time and space to improve. However, they also know when to call it a day with sub-par performance. Patience is a crucial competency for great leadership.

12. Great leaders are genuinely inclusive

Great leaders foster inclusivity, valuing diversity beyond mere metrics. When tempted to build teams in their own image, leaders must recognize the value of those who operate differently. Genuine inclusivity appreciates the worth of all contributions, not just those delivered in a familiar form or pace. A true leader is like a teacher or a class leader, welcoming and valuing even the quietest voices.

13. Great leaders filter work

Effective leaders don't just blindly pass requests down to their team. Instead, they act as a filter, prioritizing their team's time and pushing back on unrealistic demands. This approach not only boosts productivity but fosters trust and respect between the leader and the team.

Conclusion
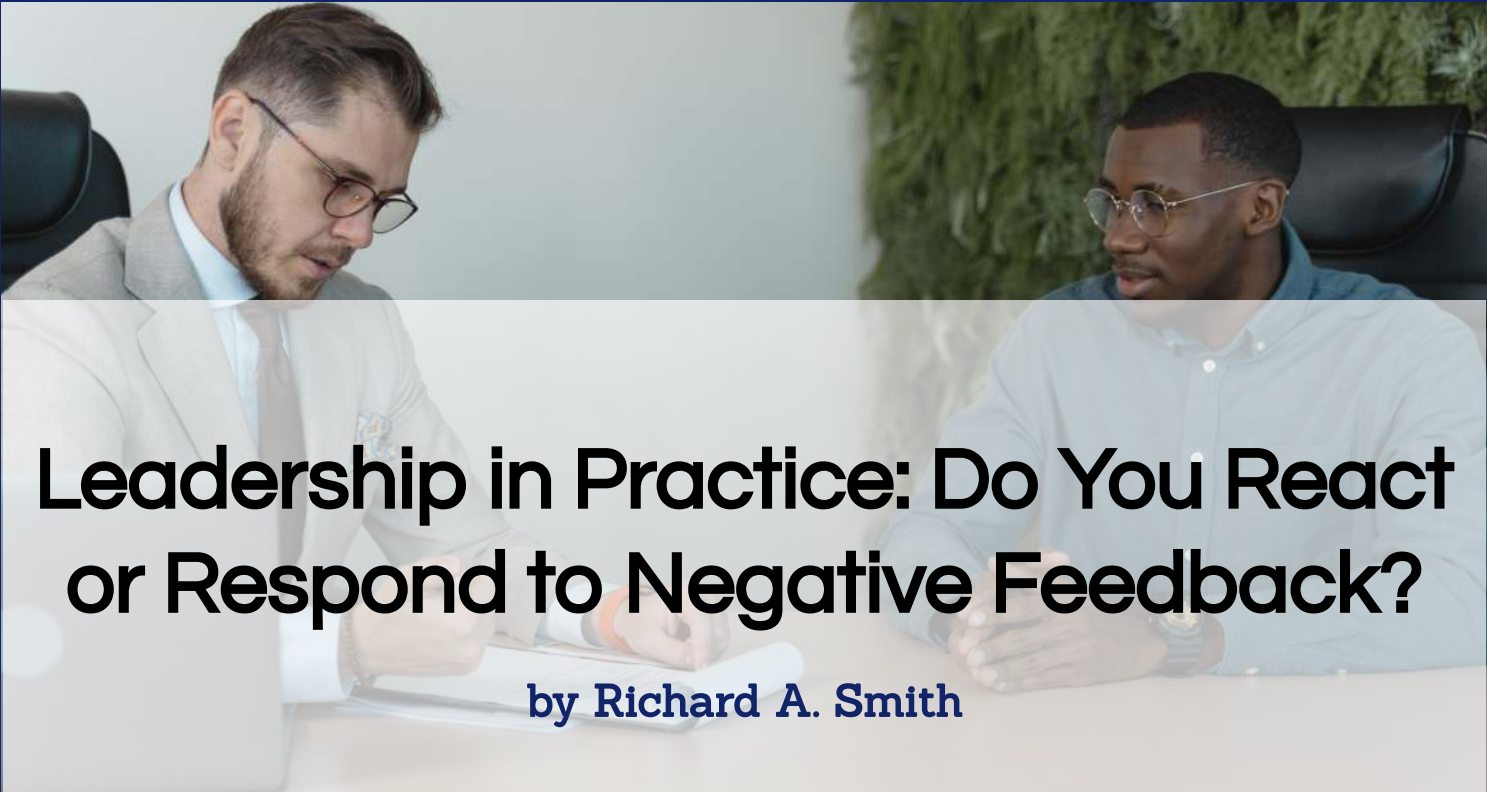
Great leaders prioritize the greater good and empower their teams, rather than demanding blind obedience. They make difficult decisions in uncertain situations and leave a lasting positive impact on the world. These unconventional competencies set exceptional leaders apart and can create more productive and innovative teams, as well as a positive workplace culture.

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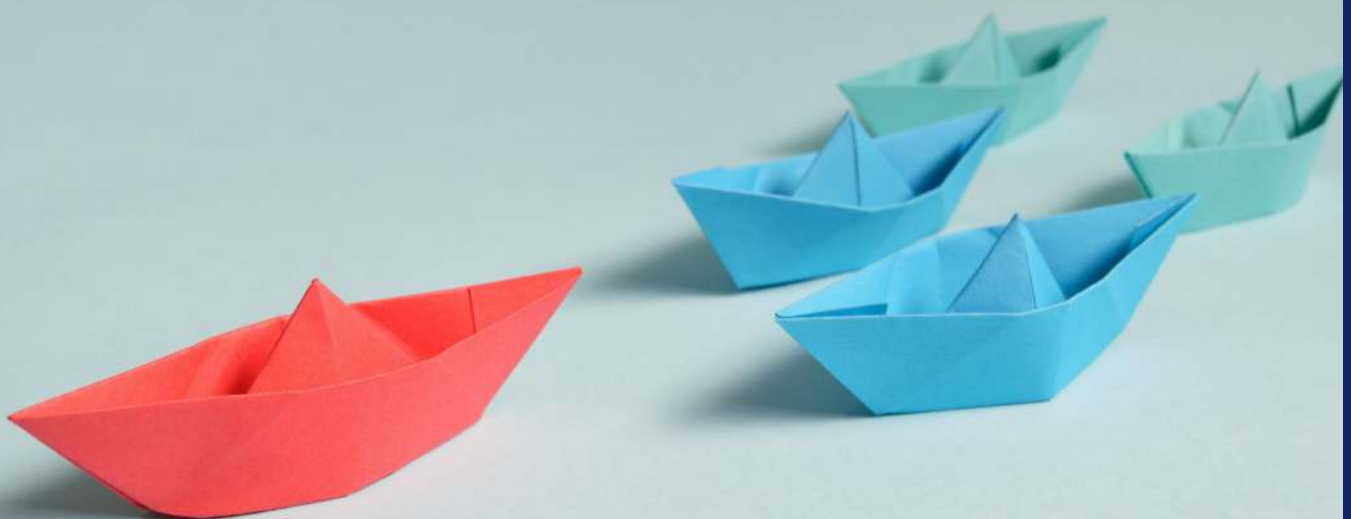
Leadership in Practice: Do You React or Respond to Negative Feedback?

by Richard A. Smith

Drop a bomb. Shoot the messenger. Rain on the parade. Delivering bad news or negative feedback is rarely a pleasant experience, mainly because most people are not sure how feedback will be received. Some employees fear their critiques will be ignored, not valued, or even worse, become cause for repercussions. But many senior leaders now recognize that removing a reactive posture when receiving difficult news enables greater dialogue and better outcomes. Prioritizing emotional intelligence (EQ), leaders can objectively consider a situation and listen with intent to learn from it.

A growing perspective among successful executives is, "I will achieve better organizational results, have better relationships with employees and customers, and better manage feedback when I have high EQ." Emphasis on emotional intelligence ensures that leaders meet business objectives while also fostering strong organizational culture, building relationships, and empowering people managers. Handling negative feedback well is a hallmark of sophisticated leadership skills.
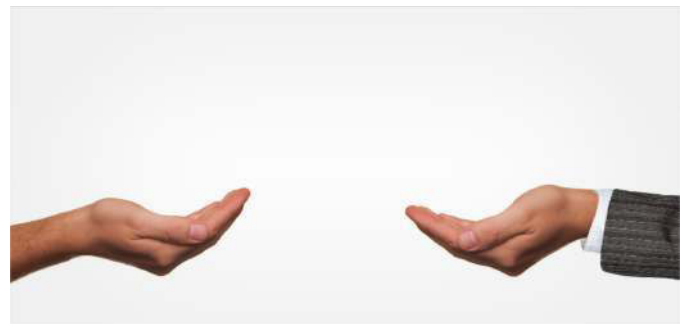
Often driven by an executive's perception and priorities, organizational culture defines how feedback is given and received. Healthy organizational culture empowers employees to give and receive negative feedback productively.

Companies with a 'gotcha culture,' where mistakes are not seen as opportunities to learn and grow but instead as targets for punishment, are highly unlikely to provide any feedback at all.

Additionally, companies with weak organizational culture may see negative feedback as a personal attack or professional jealousy. These types of cultures are reactive, following feedback with knee-jerk impulses.

Reactionary executives typically don't cultivate channels for feedback, so people are unsure how to give it and how it will impact their careers. This, in turn, creates a culture of insecurity and disempowerment. Executives that don't handle bad news well blame others. They may resort to behavior that indicates they don't trust their team, questioning other colleagues' competence, and becoming argumentative. Executives with lower EQ may micromanage instead of relying on the managerial talents of the teams around them. Other mistakes may include overreacting, avoidance, and, worst of all, dismissing it entirely.

In the best-case scenario, executives with very high EQ listen.

They ensure they are responsive, taking time to fully process feedback, examining their internal anxieties and self-monitoring their behaviors, and then thinking about strategically deploying organizational resources to address this feedback.
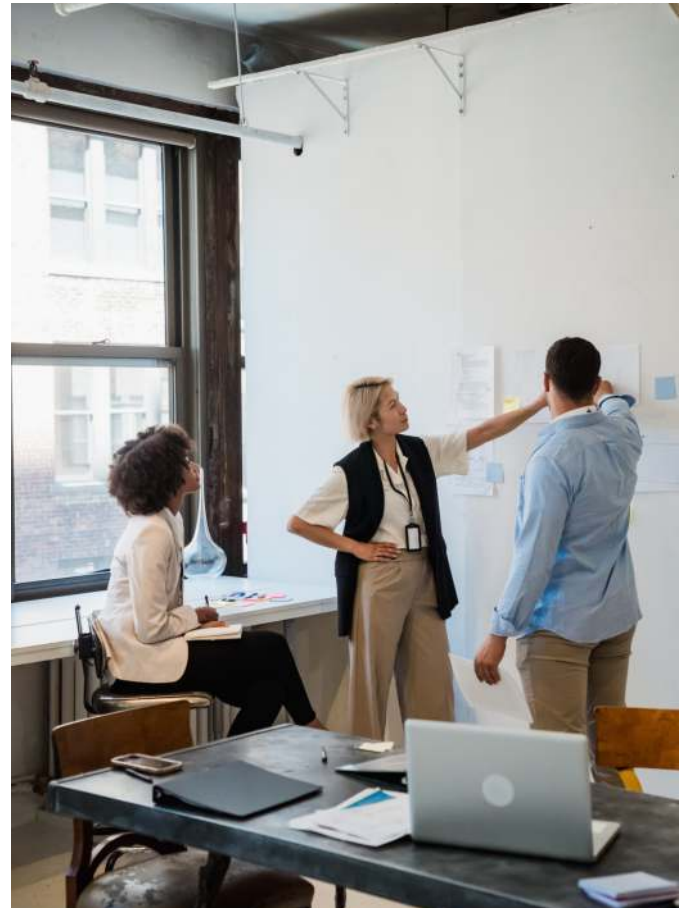
Constructive negative feedback is timely, gives behaviorally specific examples, and provides an alternative way to respond to those problematic behaviors. Executives with high EQ use negative feedback as an opportunity for mindset growth and behavioral change.

Once an executive has reconciled with legitimate negative feedback, they must make actual changes. They should take tangible actions like modifying their behavior or the company's trajectory to align impact and intent with organizational objectives and values.

When leaders get bad news and engage in high EQ activities to manage the situation, act on the feedback, and nurture relationships, positive ripple effects on culture and business performance will follow. Any executive that wants to learn how to handle negative feedback should ask the people around them how they've received bad news in the past and how they successfully handle it now.

Leaders need to become more self-aware about how their behavior affects others. Impact needs to match intent. Responsive leadership can range from moments of reflection to hiring an executive coach or conducting an organizational survey like the Hogan Assessment.

Executives should cultivate the leadership skills that enable them to create a culture in which both positive and constructive feedback are welcome. Team members should feel comfortable giving feedback regularly, not just when something negative needs to be addressed.

When leaders create an environment where negative feedback is heard and used to leverage change, people understand the importance of providing and growing from authentic feedback. The result fosters strong organizational culture and, ultimately, business success.

Summary

Active Listening and Emotional Intelligence are both vital parts of an empowering work environment.

Avoid 'gotcha culture' and instead, see feedback as exciting opportunities to learn and grow.

Lead by example and create a culture where negative feedback is heard and used to leverage change
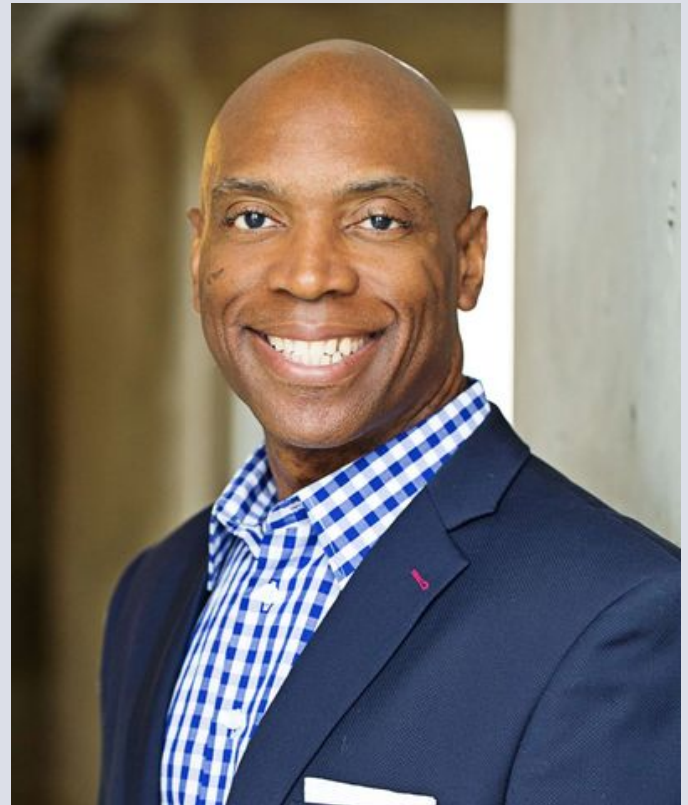
Richard A. Smith is the managing partner of Benton + Bradford Consulting. Richard is a sought-after speaker, coach and consultant to Fortune 500 companies. His areas of expertise include organizational culture, business strategy, DEI and leadership development.

Mentoring as a Talent Development Solution to Address Employment Trends

by Laura Francis

The COVID-19 pandemic sent the labor market on a wild ride, from historic levels of unemployment to The Great Resignation. As the economy recovered, companies struggled to rehire the workers they had laid off or furloughed, but many employees refused to return or found higher-paying jobs elsewhere. According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 3.5 million workers did not rejoin the workforce even into 2022.

In 2021, supply and demand tipped in favor of workers. Visually striking, in particular, were quit rates in the United States. These surged to the highest percentage since the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) began collecting quit rate data in the year 2000. Companies scramble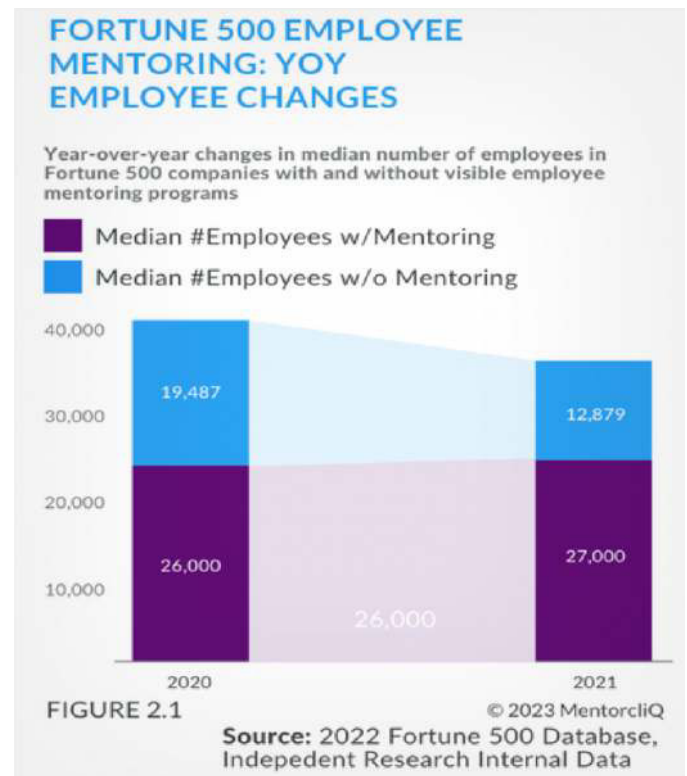d to retain and attract workers by offering extended work-from-home flexibility, pay raises, bonuses, and shorter work weeks.

FORTUNE 500 EMPLOYEE MENTORING: YOY EMPLOYEE CHANGES

Year-over-year changes in median number of employees in Fortune 500 companies with and without visible employee mentoring programs

- Median #Employees w/Mentoring
- Median #Employees w/o Mentoring

FIGURE 2.1 © 2023 MentorcliQ
Source: 2022 Fortune 500 Database, Indepedent Research Internal Data

However, a stronger focus on employee engagement, including mentoring programs, may have played a critical role in helping some companies retain employees. Our analysis of mentoring at Fortune 500 companies found that companies with mentoring programs had a median headcount of 26K in 2020, while those without mentoring programs had a median headcount of 19.4K.

FORTUNE 500 MENTORING: MEDIAN YOY CHANGES IN # OF EMPLOYEES

Median # of employees at Fortune 500 companies between 2020 and 2021

■ Has Mentoring   ■ No Mentoring

The median number of employees at companies with mentoring programs slightly increased YoY.

27,000

The median number of employees at companies without mentoring programs decreased by 33% between 2020 and 2021.

12,879

Jan 2020 — Feb — Mar — Apr — May — Jun — Jul — Aug — Sep — Oct — Nov — Dec — Jan 2021
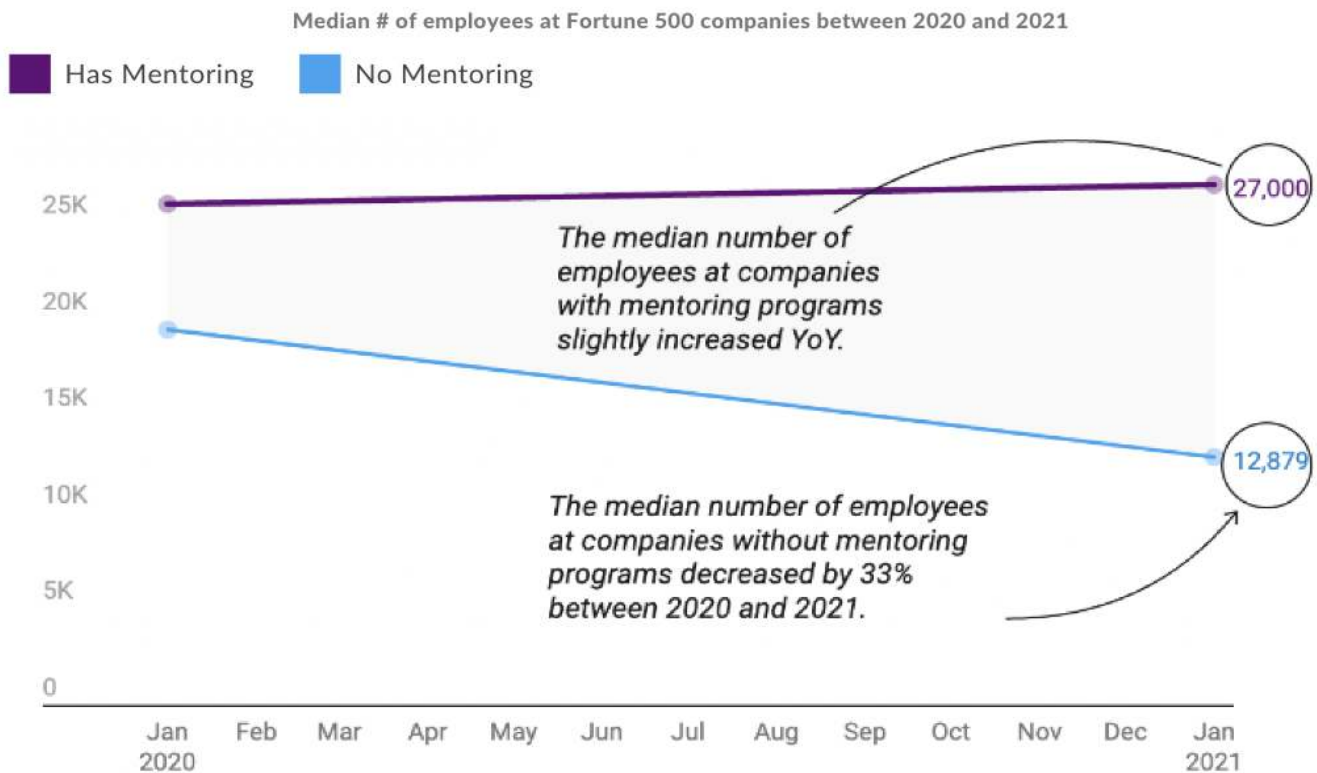
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FIGURE 2.2

Source: Forbes Fortune 500

By the end of 2021, companies with mentoring programs emerged relatively unscathed from The Great Resignation and even slightly increased their median headcount, while companies without mentoring programs saw their headcount decline dramatically. The median number of employees at Fortune 500 companies without mentoring programs dropped 33% YoY, down to around 12.8K.

Pandemic-weary workers were not only looking for more money and work-from-home flexibility but also new ways to connect and grow in their careers. Companies that offered a variety of engagement and growth options, such as upskilling and reskilling opportunities and inclusive Employee Resource Groups, were better positioned to attract and retain workers.

The rapid growth in visible mentoring programs at Fortune 500 companies likely indicates that executives and HR leaders recognized the importance of engagement and development programs in retaining employees.

After staring at large piles of exit survey data, HR leaders at many Fortune 500 companies likely "read the tea leaves" and rushed to implement or expand their mentoring programs and other engagement and retention initiatives. Since these company leaders talk to each other, it's not a wild guess to suggest that they also leaned into their own professional networks and heard similar stories pointing to mentoring and engagement.

The data strongly suggests that companies that maintained or launched programs designed to engage and grow their employees in 2021 shielded themselves from the worst effects of The Great Resignation. It also ties into what we already know about what employees want from their employers: strong communities and connections, autonomy, and learning and development opportunities.

Mentoring is proving to be the type of innovative catch-all strategy that solves the biggest and most pressing employee engagement issues of our day. In business, as goes the Fortune 500, as goes the world. Given 92% of the Fortune 500 now leans into mentoring, that's as big a hint as any that structured and thoughtful mentoring is now a must-have and proven standard.

Laura Francis is the Mentoring Community Director for MentorcliQ. She has more than 20 years of experience focused on mentoring, thought leadership, and strategic innovation. The proud mom of a child with disabilities, she enjoys writing about the connections she sees in her personal life and professional life. Laura co-authored a chapter in ATD's Handbook for Training and Talent Development (3rd Edition). She has also written numerous articles that can be found on ATD, T+D, Chief Learning Officer, and Training Industry.

Leadership for Change

by Evan Tzivanakis

As a leader, I understand the importance of creating change within my organization. Change can be difficult and uncomfortable, but it is necessary to remain competitive in today's constantly evolving business world. In this article, I will discuss the essential aspects of leadership for change and provide insight into how to successfully implement change within an organization.

The first step in leadership for change is to clearly define the change that needs to occur. As a leader, it is important to identify the problem or opportunity for improvement, and then articulate the desired outcome. This can be done by creating a vision statement or a mission statement that clearly communicates the desired change. This statement should be concise, easy to understand, and should inspire and motivate others to support the change.

Once the vision statement has been created, it is important to communicate the change to the entire organization.

Communication is key to ensuring that everyone understands the change, why it is necessary, and what role they play in making it happen. As a leader, it is important to use multiple channels of communication, including face-to-face meetings, email, and social media, to ensure that everyone is aware of the change.

The next step in leadership for change is to involve others in the process. Change can be scary, and people are often resistant to change. However, involving others in the change process can help to reduce this resistance and increase buy-in. As a leader, it is important to create a sense of ownership and accountability among those who will be affected by the change. This can be done by involving them in the planning process, listening to their concerns, and providing opportunities for feedback and input.

In addition to involving others in the change process, it is important to provide the necessary resources to support the change. This may include financial resources, technology, or training. As a leader, it is important to identify the resources needed to support the change and to allocate those resources in a way that maximizes their impact.

Another important aspect of leadership for change is to create a sense of urgency. Change can be difficult, and it is often easier to continue doing things the way they have always been done. However, creating a sense of urgency can help to motivate people to support the change. This can be done by highlighting the risks of not changing, as well as the potential benefits of the change.
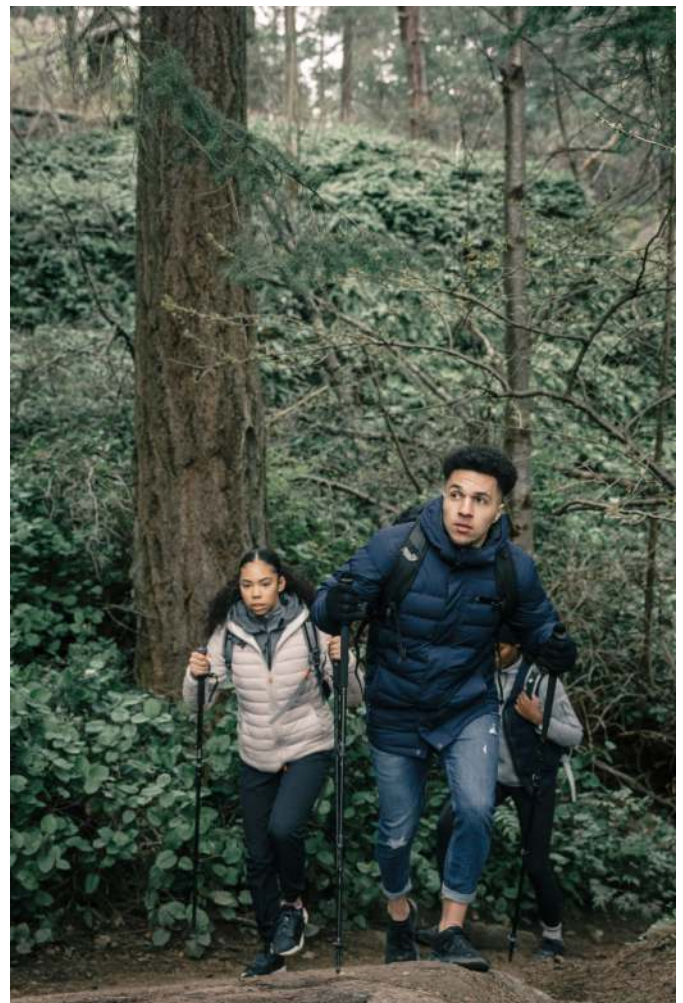
Finally, it is important to lead by example. As a leader, it is important to model the behavior that is expected of others. This means being open to feedback, embracing change, and being willing to take risks. It also means being willing to hold yourself accountable for the success of the change, and to be transparent about the progress being made.

In conclusion

Leadership for change is essential for organizations that want to remain competitive in today's constantly evolving business world. To successfully implement change, leaders must clearly define the change, communicate it to the organization, involve others in the process, provide necessary resources, create a sense of urgency, and lead by example. By following these steps, leaders can create a culture of change that will help their organization to thrive in the years to come.

Evan Tzivanakis is an Award Winning Accredited Executive Coach, L&D Specialist, Management Consultant, and an Online Visiting Lecturer at the EU Business School, Switzerland. With a wealth of experience managing more than 500 employees across 8 countries and leading companies to expand across the Asia Pacific region, Evan is well-equipped in supporting managers and senior leaders with their professional journey. His work has been featured in numerous articles, videos, and podcasts such as Ivy Exec, Marketing in Asia, The Coach Foundation, Finance Feeds, CEO Secrets for Executive Strategy, salesforce and EU Business School.

Creating a Culture of Psychological Safety: Key Stages and Actionable Tips for Leaders

by Jonathan H. Westover

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing business landscape, creating a culture of psychological safety is more important than ever. Leaders who prioritize the well-being and growth of their team members can create an environment where everyone feels respected, included, and valued. In this article, we will explore the four key elements of psychological safety: inclusion, learning, contribution, and challenge, and how leaders can develop these elements within their organizations. We will also provide actionable tips to help leaders create an environment where team members feel comfortable being their authentic selves, are encouraged to learn and grow, feel accountable for their contributions, and are comfortable challenging the status quo.

As leaders, it is essential to remember that our teams are made up of humans first and employees second.

The workplace is a dynamic environment that requires an atmosphere of trust and security for employees to feel comfortable, confident, and motivated in their roles. To create such a workplace, leaders must prioritize psychological safety and provide their teams with the four key stages: inclusion, learning, contribution, and challenge.

The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety™

Stage	Definition of Respect	Definition of Permission	Social Exchange
1. Inclusion Safety	Respect for the individual's innate need to be included, accepted, and gain a sense of belonging.	Permission for the individual to interact with you as a human being.	Inclusion in exchange for human status and the absence of harm.
2. Learner Safety	Respect for the individual's innate need to learn, grow, and develop mastery.	Permission for the individual to engage in the learning process and make mistakes.	Encouragement in exchange for engagement.
3. Contributor Safety	Respect for the individual's innate need for autonomy, and meaningful contribution.	Permission for the individual to work with appropriate autonomy.	Autonomy with guidance in exchange for performance and results.
4. Challenger Safety	Respect for the individual's innate need to innovate and improve the status quo.	Permission for the individual to make challenges to the status quo in good faith.	Air cover in exchange for candor.

Clark, Timothy R. The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2020.

The Four Stages of Psychological Safety

1. <u>Inclusion Safety</u> means creating an environment where team members feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work and feel like they belong to the team. It is crucial to cultivate an environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and supported, regardless of their background or identity. Leaders must ensure that their team members feel heard, seen, and understood, and that their opinions and perspectives are appreciated.

2. <u>Learner Safety</u> means creating an environment where learning is encouraged, and mistakes are seen as opportunities for growth. Leaders must promote a culture of continuous learning, where employees feel encouraged to take risks, experiment, and learn from their mistakes. Leaders must embrace a growth mindset and recognize that failure is an essential part of the learning process and an opportunity for growth.

3. <u>Contributor Safety</u> means creating an environment where team members feel accountable for outcomes and feel valued for their contributions. Leaders must provide their team members with clear guidance and expectations and ensure that they have the necessary resources and support to carry out their responsibilities. Team members should feel like they have a meaningful impact on the team and the organization and that their contributions are appreciated and recognized.

4. <u>Challenger Safety</u> means creating an environment where team members feel comfortable speaking up and challenging the status quo. Leaders must encourage their team members to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions, even if they differ from the prevailing narrative. It is essential to cultivate an environment where constructive feedback is appreciated, and healthy debate is encouraged. Leaders must be open-minded and willing to listen to different perspectives, even if they challenge their beliefs.

By embracing the four key stages of psychological safety, leaders can create a culture of inclusion and innovation. When team members feel comfortable being their authentic selves, are encouraged to learn and grow, feel accountable for their contributions, and are comfortable challenging the status quo, they can thrive and do their best work.

Actionable Steps to Develop Psychological Safety

Here are some actionable tips to help you develop psychological safety within your organization:

1. Lead by example: As a leader, you must model the behavior you want to see in your team members. Show vulnerability, admit mistakes, and be open to feedback. Encourage risk-taking and experimentation and recognize that failure is an essential part of the learning process.

2. Create a safe space for feedback: Encourage your team members to share their thoughts, ideas, and feedback, and create a safe space for them to do so. Recognize that feedback is a gift, and embrace it as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

3. Celebrate diversity and inclusion: Embrace diversity and inclusion as a core value of your organization. Create a culture where everyone feels respected, valued, and included, regardless of their background or identity. Recognize that different perspectives and experiences can lead to innovation and better outcomes.

4. Recognize and appreciate contributions: Ensure that your team members feel valued and appreciated for their contributions. Recognize their achievements and celebrate their successes. Provide opportunities for growth and development and ensure that their efforts are recognized and rewarded.

Creating a culture of psychological safety is essential for the success of any organization. By prioritizing inclusion, learning, contribution, and challenge, leaders can create an environment where team members feel comfortable being their authentic selves, are encouraged to learn and grow, feel accountable for their contributions, and are comfortable challenging the status quo.

Common Challenges Leaders Face when Trying to Create a Culture of Psychological Safety

Creating a culture of psychological safety is not an easy feat, and leaders may face several challenges along the way. Here are some common challenges leaders may encounter when trying to create a culture of psychological safety:

1. Resistance to change: Creating a culture of psychological safety may require a change in mindset and behavior, which may be met with resistance from some team members. Effective change management strategies and communication are essential to overcome this challenge.

2. Lack of trust: Trust is a critical component of psychological safety, but it may take time to build. Leaders must be patient and consistent in their efforts to build trust with their team members.

3. Fear of vulnerability: Encouraging team members to be vulnerable and share their thoughts and ideas can be challenging, as it requires a level of trust and comfort that may not exist initially. Leaders must create a safe space for vulnerability and model the behavior they want to see in their team members.

4. Lack of accountability: Holding team members accountable for their outcomes is essential for creating a culture of psychological safety, but it may require a shift in organizational culture. Leaders must provide clear guidance and expectations and ensure that team members feel accountable for their contributions.

5. Limited resources: Creating a culture of psychological safety may require resources such as time, money, and training, which may not be readily available. Leaders must be creative in finding ways to allocate resources and prioritize psychological safety initiatives.

6. Inconsistent leadership: Inconsistent leadership can undermine efforts to create a culture of psychological safety. Leaders must be consistent in their messaging and behavior and ensure that all team members are held to the same standards.

Creating a culture of psychological safety is not without its challenges. Leaders must be patient, consistent, and committed to their efforts to create a safe and supportive environment for their team members.

By overcoming challenges such as resistance to change, lack of trust, fear of vulnerability, lack of accountability, limited resources, and inconsistent leadership, leaders can build a workplace where everyone feels comfortable being their authentic selves and contributing their full potential to the team.

Encouraging Team Members to Challenge the Status Quo

Encouraging team members to challenge the status quo is an important part of creating a culture of psychological safety. Here are some ways that leaders can foster an environment where team members feel comfortable challenging the status quo:
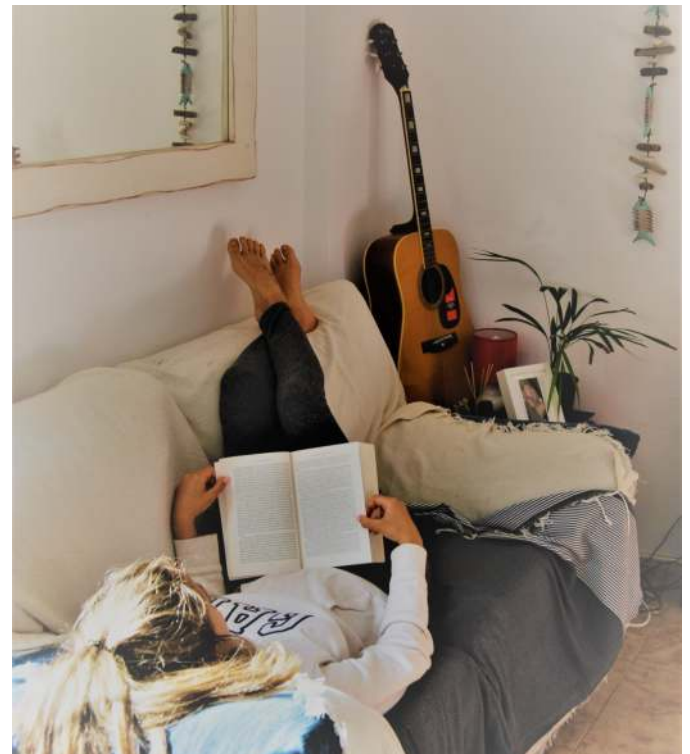
1. Recognize and reward innovative thinking: Recognize and reward team members who challenge the status quo and come up with innovative ideas. Celebrate their successes and provide opportunities for them to share their ideas with the rest of the team.

2. Encourage risk-taking: Encourage your team members to take risks and experiment with new ideas. Embrace failure as an essential part of the learning process and recognize that taking risks can lead to innovation and better outcomes.

3. Empower your team members: Give your team members the autonomy and resources they need to challenge the status quo. Ensure that they have the support they need to carry out their responsibilities and that they feel accountable for their outcomes.

4. Foster a culture of continuous learning: Encourage your team members to learn and grow, and provide opportunities for them to develop new skills and knowledge. Embrace a growth mindset and recognize that there is always room for improvement.

Encouraging team members to challenge the status quo is an important part of creating a culture of psychological safety. By recognizing and rewarding innovative thinking, encouraging risk-taking, empowering your team members, and fostering a culture of continuous learning, leaders can create an environment where team members feel comfortable challenging the status quo and driving innovation.

Conclusion

Creating a culture of psychological safety is essential for the success of any organization. By prioritizing inclusion, learning, contribution, and challenge, leaders can create an environment where team members feel valued, respected, and included. Encouraging team members to challenge the status quo, promoting a culture of continuous learning, and recognizing and rewarding innovative thinking can help create a culture of psychological safety that fosters innovation and growth. By embracing these principles and creating a safe and supportive environment for their team members, leaders can build a workplace where everyone can thrive and do their best work.

Jonathan H. Westover, Ph.D. is Managing Partner and Principal at Human Capital Innovations, LLC, with 20 years of experience as a professional coach and OD/HR/Leadership consultant transforming organizations across the globe. Dr. Westover has been published widely in popular and professional media locally and abroad (such as The Economist, U.S. News and World Report, The Wall Street Journal, and others). Dr. Westover is a visiting fellow and academic at many international business programs, including a CIPD Academic Fellow, a HEA Senior Fellow, and a Visiting Academic at Harris Manchester College at the University of Oxford.

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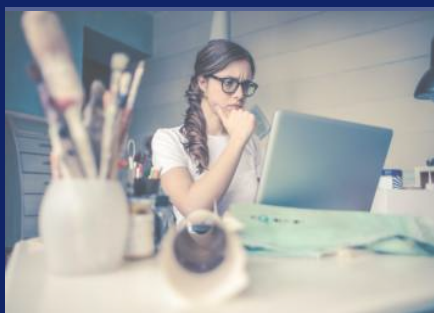
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