

FALL & WINTER
2015

Solutions

PRACTICAL PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP THE BEST IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS

THIS ISSUE

LEADING WITH PURPOSE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

And Other Strategies
To Keep You
Moving Forward

PLUS

MS Office Tips

DR. ALAN ZIMMERMAN'S

Comment

AND

COURAGE

From MARGIE WARRELL

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KEEPING YOUR TEAM

Fired UP!

By Allan Forbis

Director, Center for Management and Professional Development

There always seems to be plenty of work to go around these days. With new projects, changing priorities, staff turnover, and a host of other things thrown in for good measure, it can be difficult just finding a few minutes to catch your breath, much less anything else. The same can be true for your work team. After all, just like you, they can take quite a beating over the course of the year trying to keep all the plates spinning.

If you're the team leader, you already know how important it is to keep each person engaged in the team's success, but that doesn't necessarily mean you have a master plan to do it. I personally subscribe to the theory that there is likely no one best way to go about doing this and that "one size" will not fit all. That said; if you're not sure how to fire-up your team, don't just give up. Before you start waving the white flag in surrender, here are some points that may spark some ideas, and hopefully some action too.

This article continues on the next page.

Keeping Your Team Fired-Up!

Continued from Page 1

Know who you're working with. It's likely that every person on your team is just a little (or maybe a lot) different from every other team member.

One of your most important jobs will be to figure out what makes each person happy or sad, what makes them feel good about the work they do, what most engages their interest, what motivates them (i.e., achievement, connection, empowerment, etc.), what's going on in their life at any given moment – and yes, how all of that put together makes them “tick.”

It's only then that you'll have the data you need to help keep them fired-up. There is one catch though. Learning this will be a continuous process; and it won't likely come to you in a vision. You'll only get it by having frequent one-on-one conversations with each person.

Be approachable. It's a safe bet that all of us have either heard or used the phrase, *my door is always open*. But what does that really mean? When a staff member walks through your door to discuss a problem, share an idea, ask for some sage advice, or simply to say hello, do they find someone ready to engage in conversation with them, or someone who is simply going through the motions because it's expected?

Sure, there will be times when you just can't stop to talk for any number of reasons, but on the whole, how do these conversations usually play out for you? If your team knows they can come to you with a problem, concern or suggestion, and you will hear them out, it's going to create a team that consistently performs.

Don't be a green blooded Vulcan!

While you're working on being approachable, remember that it's okay not to be like Spock, the character on *Star Trek*. Let your emotions come through. Smile, laugh, have good natured fun with your team, and enjoy those moments when it's appropriate to do so. This will encourage others to mirror your actions, and it may let some of the air out of the “seriousness balloon.” Probably couldn't hurt, and it's sure to be *fascinating!*

Ask some brave questions. Another way to learn what you can do as a leader to keep your team fired-up is to go out on a limb and just ask them. In their book, *Bring Out the Best in Every Employee* (McGraw-Hill, 2013), authors Don Brown and Bill Hawkins did just that by focusing their research on the following questions:

1. If you could tell me one thing about my leadership of you, what would it be?
2. In leading you, what do you want me to *start* doing?
3. What do you want me to *stop* doing?
4. What do you want me to *continue* doing?

The next time you're having a one-on-one conversation with a team member, consider using these powerful questions (or similar ones) to bridge the gap from where you are now to where you'd like to be. The answers might surprise you.

Encourage growth. For many people (and you probably know some of them), excitement comes from doing something new, something that is challenging, and something that possibly takes them out of their comfort zone. If every day is just business as usual for your team, even though there may be *plenty* of work to do, you may see lower energy and malaise about the work in general. Don't let this get the best of everyone. Look for ways to introduce some change into the workday.

Wake your team up by mixing in special projects, mentoring opportunities, and other skill building assignments that generate excitement and positive energy. Encourage employees to roll up their sleeves and get involved in something new – something innovative – something great. It will inspire them to be more productive today while preparing them to assume an even greater role (perhaps that of leader) in the future.

Make friends. Despite increasingly isolated work settings, a lot of work still has to be accomplished with other people (yep, the guy sitting next to you). That's why great leaders help employees build professional friendships too.

While some of you may be rolling your eyes right now, let's not forget the Gallup study on this. You know – the one that says employees who have a best friend at work are *seven times* more likely to be engaged at work than those who don't. Those with a close friend at work are nearly *twice* as likely to be satisfied with their pay – and 27 percent more likely to see their strengths as aligned with the organization's goals. And that these same individuals are statistically more likely to satisfy customers, get more done in less time, have more fun on the job, innovate and share more ideas, and simply show up to work more consistently.

Sure, some work friendships can create problems, but the advantages generally outweigh the disadvantages. With this in mind, recognize the role you play in helping team members make friends (or at least in getting along); and that this often translates into learning how to resolve conflicts, building relationships of trust, and depending upon each other for support. Any amount of time you put into this will likely bring you and your team lasting dividends.

Stress accountability. One additional way to keep team members fired-up is to make sure everyone knows what their job really is, and that they are accountable to get specific things done. While it's good to be part of something “big,” it's also important not to get lost in the crowd. Make sure everyone feels valued – and sees the value in what they do. Without that, it's hard to get excited about anything.

As you consider the various ways to keep your team going strong, don't forget that each person is truly different. Some may require more handholding than others; and some may say (or you may think) that they don't need much of anything from you at all. At one time or another though, each person will need something, and you will be in a position to provide it. It's like the following quote from Zig Ziglar:

“People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing. That's why we recommend it daily.”



Allan Forbis is the Director of the Center for Management and Professional Development (Center). The Center's team of consultants provide training solutions that help employers see what happens when they work together to provide direction, awareness and focus for employees. They succeed by providing strategies for managing the performance of the people that make success a reality.



Sometimes you have to *look back* to *look forward*

By Lolly Daskal

As the year begins, most of us are looking forward and making plans for the future—but sometimes to move ahead you must look back.

The best leaders are always taking stock of their lives, asking and reflecting. The best way to make improvements is to decide three things: *what came before*, *what comes next*, and *how to get it*.

But in order to move forward, you have to assess what you have learned about yourself up to this point. Here are 10 year-end review questions to ask yourself as you prepare a strategy for moving forward.

1. What defined you most the past year? Make a list of your defining moments in the past year and how they portray who you are. What impact did they have? How have they changed you? Reflect on those times and what they meant to you.

2. What people have you encountered and what did you learn from them? Some of those we meet have an enormous impact on us, and others don't. Some teach us lessons we may not have been ready to learn. Make a list of the people you met and what you've learned from them. What did they say or do that was especially compelling? How have they changed you?

3. What books did I read and what have they taught me? We become the books we read; books give wisdom to our soul and wings to our mind. As Dr. Seuss said so eloquently, *"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."* Books teach us about ourselves; they clarify ideas for us and inspire us to grow and expand. Make a list of the books you read last year and what has stayed with you from that reading.

4. Where did I succeed best? Make a list of all your biggest accomplishments. Even those that seem small to others may loom larger for you, because you know what effort it took to get there. What were your biggest accomplishments? Were they the result of pure determination, or was luck a factor? Where did you take a risk and succeed?

5. Where did I fail? What didn't work this year? Where did you make mistakes? Fold a page in half and on one side list all your failures. On the other side list all the lessons you learned from those failures. Remember a failure is a lesson and the first step to a success, and write "thank you" at the end of your list.

6. How did I treat myself when it came to my mental health, physical health spiritual healthy, emotional well-being?

What have you done to care for yourself this year? How can you make yourself more important in your priorities? A tired malnourished mind is over stressed and rarely productive. What will you do to nourish all parts of yourself? Make a list of how you will honor yourself—all of yourself.

7. What can I improve on? Even one small intention can make a big improvement. Make a list of all the things you want to improve on. Look to see where you can do better next time, where can you tweak things so you get different results. The way to make major impact is to get serious about improving yourself.

8. What do I need to stop? What isn't working for you? Maybe you need to stop caring so much what other people think. Maybe you need to stop over-thinking or worrying about everything. Maybe you need to stop delaying the risk and go for it. Maybe you need to stop procrastinating. Maybe you need to stop living someone else's life and start becoming the person you are meant to be. Look at what you need to stop and take action to eliminate it.

9. What can I be grateful for? List all the things that you are grateful for: your health, your family, things that worked out, ways you could be of service? Be grateful for the times you were able to make a difference. Having an attitude of gratitude gives you more to be appreciative of.

10. What do I need to start? In order to become who you are born to be, you must follow your heart and make the time to accomplish the things you are meant to do. If you did not do them this past year, how can you get started? Make a list of all the things you want to accomplish and what you need to begin making it happen... whether it's writing a book, mending a relationship, launching a business. Think of all of the things you need to start and make the plan.

A year-end review helps you prepare a new path for your future. It is the things we learn about ourselves that help us move forward into our success. Lead from within: The only time you should look back to see how far you have come is when you want to know how to move forward into the future. Doing so allows you to see how much you have accomplished and where you still want to go.

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Lolly Daskal is one of the world's leading executive coaches, working directly with Fortune 500 CEOs and top political leaders. A pioneer of heart-based leadership, she is a regular columnist for *Inc.*, *Fast Company*, *Harvard Business Review*, the *Huffington Post*, and *Psychology Today*. Ms. Daskal is one of the most prominent leadership voices of our time. She has been named one of the "The most inspirational woman" by the *Huffington Post*, and "100 Great Leadership Speakers for Your Next Conference" by *Inc.* She has consulted with more than 300 corporations across the United States and Europe. Lolly Daskal's mission is to help all leaders lead from within. Learn more at www.lollydaskal.com

"My grandfather once told me that there were two kinds of people: those who do the work and those who take the credit. He told me to try to be in the first group; there was much less competition." – Indira Gandhi



Just a thought...

Dealing with substandard work

Dealing with substandard performance often takes a good deal of work and patience. If you've let an employee's performance slide up until now, you may have a number of issues to deal with. It's probably overkill to try to address them all at once – so you'll need to decide which habits, ongoing errors, etc. to concentrate on first.

Many times, you'll find that this is the choice: focusing on important, but not-so-clear errors, or less important errors that are easier to spot and define. Which do you focus on first? Frankly, it's hard to say. One tip, though, could be to focus on one or two errors that may be similar to each other. Then move on to other trouble spots. You may not be able to correct everything right away – but the performance problem probably didn't start overnight, so give yourself some time to work through it too.

So what steps should you follow to initiate a performance "course correction? While you should always consult your HR department and/or your manager about your plans before you begin, here are five basic steps that often bring about success.

"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it." – Dwight D. Eisenhower

Step 1. Clearly define the problem.

Make sure there is no mistake about your concern, and why you are meeting with the employee. "John, your work on this report is not what I expected, or what we discussed. Let's talk about what happened and how to correct it."

Step 2. Give the employee a chance to respond and ask questions.

Hear the employee out – but do not accept defensiveness, excuses or attempts to bring up unrelated matters.

Step 3. Insist that the employee focus on the problem.

It's possible the employee may still try to evade responsibility through additional excuses or diversions. Whatever happens, maintain your focus. If you're lucky, the employee will recognize that a problem exists. If not, you will simply need to stand your ground. Insist that the problem is real; and that your hope – and expectation – is that the employee takes ownership of it after the conversation is over.

Step 4. Develop a corrective plan *with* the employee.

Be specific about what needs to be improved or corrected, and when it will be completed. Let the employee come up with as much of the plan as possible. Then set dates to review progress.

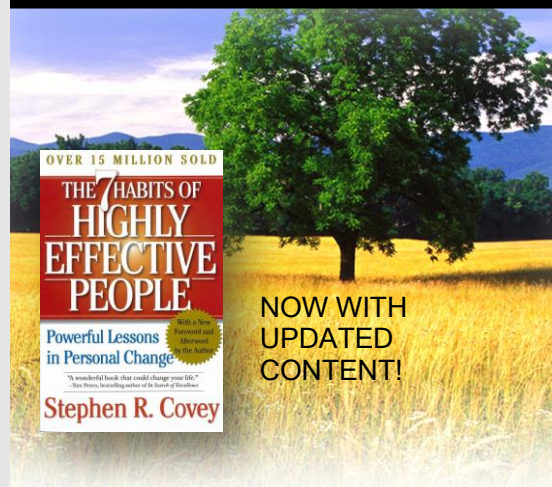
Step 5. Don't leave the situation alone until all the improvement has occurred.

Don't accept a partial "fix." If the employee sees that they can get away with less than they agreed to, they'll likely do just that. Then, when they make the same or similar error again, they may tell you that since nothing more was said about it the last time, they thought everything was okay.

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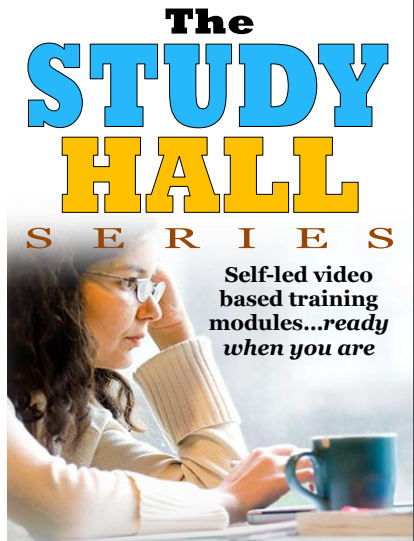
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What do you believe?

By Kevin Eikenberry

I've certainly opened with a big question, and it is a question I want you to think about as you read, and hopefully far into the future. Specifically, I want you to think about the beliefs and expectations you hold about those you lead.

But before I get back to you personally, let me give you some background.

The Research

For many years research has been done in the realm of education related to *The Pygmalion Effect*, which says in effect that the positive expectations and beliefs of teachers about their students leads them to behave in ways (consciously or not) that promotes the confidence, effectiveness and results of the students.

Research has been done as well to translate this into the workplace, looking at the beliefs of leaders and how it impacts the results of team members. The research, while hard to always complete in a completely scientific way, shows that there is a real and significant correlation.

For us as leaders, that means that our belief in our team impacts their performance. (It works both ways – lower expectations/belief leads to lower performance – this is called the Golem effect). People do their work, but our expectations and belief in them influences the quantity and quality of their work. As a leader we can't ignore this fact.

A Historical Example

Dwight Eisenhower led the Allied troops in the Normandy Invasion, the largest and most complex military operation ever. His leadership helped the Allies win World War II, and as an encore, he was President of the United States for 8 years. Several years after his retirement from public office he wrote:

"In our Army it was thought that every private had at least a Second Lieutenant's gold bars somewhere in him and he was helped and encouraged to earn them . . . I am inclined by nature to be optimistic about the capacity of a person to rise higher than he or she thought possible once interest and ambition are aroused."

There is plenty in this quotation to digest and think about, but for our purposes, let's talk about two pieces . . . "Every private had at least a Second Lieutenant's gold bars somewhere in him . . ."

Do you see Eisenhower's belief in *The Pygmalion Effect* here? If you don't know the "distance" from private to Second Lieutenant – it is a good leap. In the private sector, that would be like saying every front line employee has at least the potential to be a successful mid-level manager somewhere in them. Do you see that in your people?

And secondly . . .

" . . . and he was helped and encouraged to earn them." Eisenhower did more than tacitly believe in people's potential, he nurtured it, encouraged, and helped it come to life. Is it any wonder the he was a successful leader in multiple situations?

For You as a Leader

All of this so far is a preamble for you to think about and hopefully act on these ideas. I'll close with four application questions – three questions I encourage you to think about, write about, and perhaps even discuss with a trusted colleague.

- *What do I believe about my team?*
- *Do my beliefs support me in becoming the leader and coach I want to be?*
- *If not, what could I do to change my perspective and beliefs?*

And lastly – *What actions will I take based on my answers?*

The first three questions are important for you to consider. The fourth one though, in the end, matters most. Putting your beliefs into action is what will ultimately make a difference.

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"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them become what they are capable of being." -- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



FOUR surprising phrases to supercharge your conversation and boost your Manager IQ

By Michael Bungay Stanier at *Box of Crayons*

In *Drive*, Dan Pink sets out the factors that actually spark motivation: mastery, autonomy and purpose. If you're a manager and a leader who would like to spark some motivation – and I know you are – a simple (yet surprisingly difficult) strategy is to ask more questions. A good question increases autonomy (certainly), mastery (probably), and purpose (possibly).

Not all questions are created equal, of course. For instance, “Are you kidding me?” probably doesn't move things forward. But having a few powerful and open questions that you use regularly will increase the impact of your leadership.

However, even the best questions can come undone by the way they're asked. Whatever your favorite questions are, these four phrases will help you ask the more effectively.

1. Start out softly: “OUT OF CURIOSITY...”

“No one,” Monty Python reminded us, “expects the Spanish Inquisition.” And no one likes getting questioned by the Spanish Inquisition, although that does appear to be the inspiration for many managers' approaches.

If you're not trying to reveal incompetence but want to uncover wisdom, you often want to ratchet down the pressure, not increase it. The phrase, “*Out of curiosity...*” is a handy way to start a question. It makes the conversation feel like there's less at stake (which will help them think better) and suggest more of a partnership of equals.

2. Encourage them gently: “LOVELY. GOOD. NICE.”

We are all creatures of judgment. When we're listening to someone, we almost immediately leap to agreement or disagreement in our minds. If it's disagreement – and it so often is – we often start listening simply for the opportunity to interrupt, rather than to what the person is saying.

My friend Mark Bowden taught me the power of The Yes State: building the habit where you routinely agree with and encourage the conversation that's being shared. And the phrases that work are simple ones: *Lovely. Good. Nice. Uh-huh. Mmm.*

Here's the secret: You're not necessarily agreeing with the specific content. But you're keeping your team member in the conversation by encouraging their point-of-view on the situation, and encouraging them to figure things out. You still get the opportunity to engage with the content, and you don't have to agree with what the person is saying. Lead with encouragement, and only then find the best way to engage with the content.

3. Build on what's there: “THAT MAKES ME THINK OF...”

Imagine this: You're in a conversation with your boss and she suggests an idea on how things should be done. Is that a spark for further conversation? Or does it shut down the conversation, as people murmur their appreciation and agreement? Exactly.

Resist sharing your opinion first. Ask the person what ideas they've already got and look to build on what they share. “*That makes me think of...*” works beautifully as a bridging phrase, connecting what they've said with what you want to add. It builds and encourages them to trust their own ideas, increase the sense that “we're in it together,” and reinforces that none of us is as smart as all of us.

4. Add awe: “AND WHAT ELSE?”

You ask a question, you get an answer. For most of us, that's the sum of it. Either the conversation is done, or the first answer triggers you into offering your own thoughts, opinion, advice, and/or general pontifications.

But someone's first answer is rarely their only answer, and often not the best answer. That's why you want to get into the habit of asking *The Best Coaching Question in the World*: “*And what else?*”

Dan and Chip Heath in *Switch* quote a study that showed that decisions based on a binary choice (Should we do this or not do it?) were predominant in organizations...and had a 52% failure rate. Adding a single additional option (Should we do this or that or not?) dropped the failure rate to 32%. “*And what else?*” creates more options that lead to better choices that lead to better decisions that have more positive outcomes.

“*And what else?*” also has benefits that go beyond just better decisions. It stops you from leaping in to start fixing things. If you're asking questions you're not offering advice. And while there is a place for advice, it's not needed nearly as often as you might think. Lead with encouragement, and only then find the best way to engage with the content.

BONUS! Help them learn: “WHAT WAS MOST USEFUL HERE FOR YOU?”

This question is the perfect way to complete this small article, as well as any conversations you have with direct reports, bosses, customers or clients. To make sure the conversation you thought was breathtakingly valuable was not misunderstood by the other person, ask, “*What was most valuable here for you?*” This not only helps them extract the value of the conversation, but it provides valuable feedback for you on what you should do more of (and less of) next time.

“When will the rhetorical questions end?” asked George Carlin. That's hard to say. But I do know that when you start to build new habits and incorporate these new phrases in your everyday conversations, the good question *well asked* has begun.

TECHNICAL JOURNAL

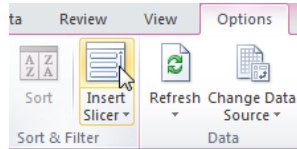
Microsoft Office Tips

From the Center for Management and Professional Development's
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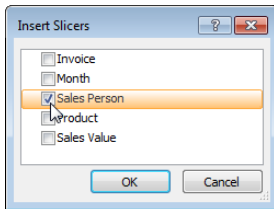
Working with Excel Pivot Table Slicers

In Excel 2010, you can use slicers to filter the data in a PivotTable. Slicers provide buttons that enables you to quickly filter data with a single click. In addition, they show the current filtering state so that you know what exactly is shown in a filtered PivotTable report. Here's what to do:

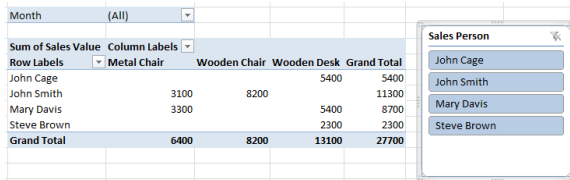
1. Click anywhere in the PivotTable.
 Click the **Options** tab.
 In the **Sort & Filter** group, click the **Insert Slicer** button.
The Insert Slicers dialog box appears.



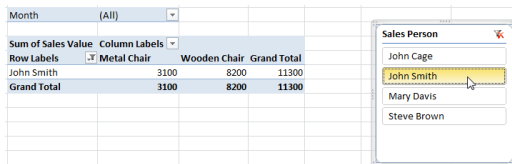
2. Click on the field you want to filter by. In our example, we selected **Sales Person**.
You can select more than one slicer at a time.



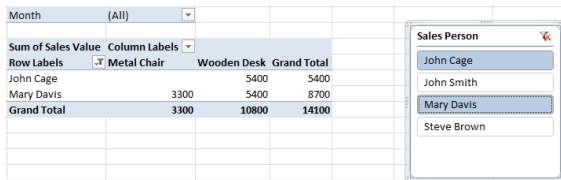
3. Click the **OK** button. A slicer appears on the worksheet, as shown below.
Note: You can drag to relocate the slicer.



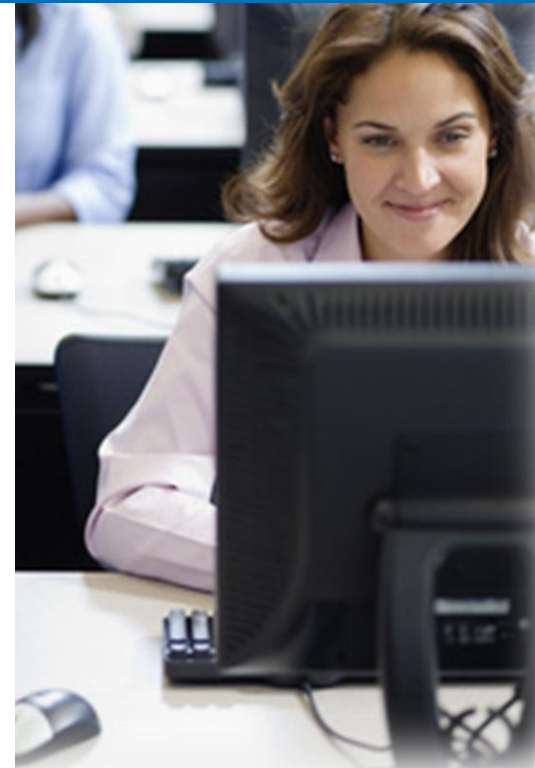
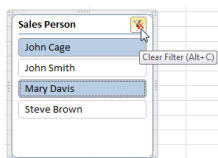
4. Click to select **John Smith**. The PivotTable is updated to show only the data for John Smith.



5. Click to select **John Cage** and **Mary Davis**.
Note: Use <Ctrl> to select more than one option.
The PivotTable is updated to show the data for John Cage and Mary Davis.



6. Click the **Clear Filter** button to shown all the data.



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Dr. Alan Zimmerman, author, national speaker and President of Zimmerman Communi-Care Network has spoken to more than a million people. The Center for Management and Professional Development is proud to offer Solutions readers the opportunity to benefit from Dr. Zimmerman's expertise and his solution-focused approach to leadership and personal enrichment.



DR. ZIMMERMAN'S Comment

Trust is a must or the relationship will bust!

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Comedian Rich Hall offers a test to help you determine which economic class you're in. He says, "If the BUILDING you work in has your name on it, you are a part of the upper class. If your DESK has your name on it, you are a part of the middle class. If the SHIRT you wear to work has your name on it, you are part of the working class."

I'm not sure that's totally true, but I do know there is often a lack of trust among the classes and even amongst the members of the same team. And that's a problem. As I often say in my presentations, "*Trust is a must or the relationship will bust.*" Trust is the foundation of every strong, effective team.

So how do you build trust? Well that would take me an entire seminar to answer, but let's start with these tips.

Open up the communication.

Get everyone in a meeting to participate...to really participate. For example, if you have some quiet people on your team, from time to time ask for their feedback. Ask them how they're reacting.

And that means asking more than surface, yes or no questions. It means more than asking, "Are you okay with this?" More often than not, those kinds of questions won't get much of a response. The quiet people will give a polite "Yes" or "Yeah, I'm okay." But that doesn't tell you very much.

So try a behavioral description ... followed by a question. For example, "I notice you haven't said anything for 30 minutes," or "I notice you looking down. What are you thinking about all of this?" You'll probably get a much more informative response.

Or try the "one-word go-around." Go around the room and ask each team member to describe how he or she feels in one word. You'll often be surprised by the answers.

Model honesty and openness.

As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "It is not fair to ask others what you are unwilling to do yourself." Or, put another way, you can't expect your team members to be totally honest and open if you aren't.

So get rid of your pretense. Be yourself ... with no embellishments. And get rid of your efforts to make a "good impression" or your little cover-ups of the real truth. The only way your team members can trust you is if they know ... what they see is what they get.

Bring your authentic best to every team encounter. As Jim Collins points out in his book, "*Good To Great*," it's a critical piece in team building. Collins says, "While you can't control the outcome ... you can control the integrity of your input and effort." So make sure your input is honest and open.

Make a commitment to stick together.

Now this is going to sound old fashioned, but trust can only exist in an atmosphere of commitment. That's why the original marriage vows asked the man and woman to pledge their loyalty to one another, in good times and in bad, until death pulled them apart.

By contrast, trust cannot grow in a relationship if one or both of the parties feels free to cut and run at any time. And the same thing goes for trust on the job. Trust cannot be maintained if labor or management sees the other as disposable.

No. Trust is built when we know ... we really know ... we're in this together. And we're going to do whatever it takes to make the relationship work.

A good example might be a team of mountain climbers. If they're going to make it, they know they've got to hang together. Or as Earl Wilson teasingly asked in the "*Herald*" newspaper of Durango, Colorado, "Do you know why mountain climbers rope themselves together? To prevent the sensible ones from going home!"

The fact is ... trust is built and trust continues to grow in a team when all the team members are committed to sticking together. The famous Aesop of "*Aesop's Fables*" talked about that hundreds of years ago.

In one of his stories, there was a farmer who had a quarrelsome family, filled with rivalry, bickering, and mistrust. He couldn't reconcile their differences with words, so he thought he might readily prevail by an example.

He called his sons together and told them to lay a bunch of sticks before him. Then, having tied the sticks into a bundle, he told the lads, one after another, to take it up and break it. They all tried, but tried in vain. Then, untying the bundle, he gave them the sticks to break one by one. This they did with the greatest ease.

Then said the father, "Thus, my sons, as long as you remain united, you are a match for all your enemies, but differ and separate, and you are undone."

ACTION:

List five ways you could dramatically increase the quantity and quality of communication in your marriage ... team ... or organization.

Increasing Clarity in Your Communication

Transcript of a MyQuickCoach video lesson from Christine Comaford

Clarity of our words requires us to *increase* explicit communication and expectations, and *decrease* implicit communication and expectations.

Explicit expectations are stated outright; we know exactly what is expected of us in detail. For example: “Please email me a spreadsheet of our top five suppliers, who the vendors are, our payment terms, and all payment-related contract terms by 5 p.m. Friday, June 15.”

Implicit expectations are those that we have to figure out, that we expect other people to magically understand. For example: “Please send me a report of our top manufacturing expenses and the details of each.” By when? In what file format? Digital or printed? What exact details do you want?

We can’t expect someone to know what we mean unless we tell them, and low or vague information often sends people into their fight, flight, or freeze state. So, if you aren’t getting the results you want – from interaction, from another person – the best question to think about is, “Am I making clear requests?”

An example of a **clear request** is: “Can you please get a report of our top five advertisers in the United States by revenue, renewal rate, and account manager to me by 4 p.m. Friday?” The recipient of the request understands what the request is, and how to be successful in promising to fulfill it. Now they can fulfill their promise by saying, “Yes, I will do that” or “No, I cannot do that, but here’s what I can do.”

How clear and direct are you? Let’s find out...

Think of a scenario where you aren’t getting the result you want with another person. Perhaps a direct report, colleague, friend, or family member isn’t following through on expectations you have.

1. Make two columns side by side.
2. Label the first “Explicit” (clear and direct) and the second “Implicit” (vague and mysterious).
3. List the explicit expectations you have of that person; these are expectations you have clearly verbalized.

4. Now fill in the implicit column; these are expectations that have not been verbalized or things you expect them to figure out without clearly telling them what you need or expect.
5. Total up your explicit and implicit expectations. Do you have more of one than the other? More implicit than explicit? Or equal?

Let’s take action.

Now meet with that person to explain this exercise and go over your implicit expectations. Encourage them to ask you for more clarity, and be sure to make it safe to do so. And when they do, thank them for helping you become a better leader.

We find that within a mere few weeks of receiving increased directness and clarity, a team member will feel safer, will understand the structure they are operating within, and will deliver much better results.

Here are some of the results from our clients who have increased their clarity and communication and what their team members have done as a result:

- Individuals are 67–100% more emotionally engaged, loyal, accountable, and ownership-focused.
- New products and services are created 29–48% faster.
- 97% of team members tangibly contribute to increasing key executive strategic and high-value time by five to fifteen hours per week.
- 100% report the ability to apply communication techniques and thinking styles both at home and at work and a resulting increase in personal and professional fulfillment.

Christine Comaford is a specialist in corporate strategy, execution and behavioral alignment. Her coaching, consulting and strategies have created hundreds of millions of dollars in new client company value and revenue. She is sought after for providing proven strategies to shift executive behavior to create more positive outcomes, enroll and align teams in times of change, massively increase sales, product offerings, and company values. Ms. Comaford is author of the New York Times bestselling business book *Rules for Renegades* (McGraw-Hill, 2007).

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COURAGE

From Margie Warrell

Resilience: Build “Muscles For Life”



Albert Einstein once said that our problems cannot be solved at the same level of thinking at which they were created. It's a powerful quote because, let's face it, life is one long stream of “problems.” And in our increasingly uncertain and pressure-laden lives, building the resilience to handle them well is increasingly indispensable.

Of course, some people seem to be covered with “Psychological Teflon” – always cool in crisis and able to take any challenge in their stride. But none are. Resilience doesn't come from some “tough gene” that only few are endowed with. It's something each of us can build and strengthen at any age by consciously engaging in “resilience-building” reframes and rituals that expand our capacity for life and enable us to process our circumstances in more constructive and courageous ways. I'll share five below (though you can read more in all of my [books](#).)

Rethink Stress. Stress often gets a bad rap, as though it's something to be avoided. But stress is not the enemy. It's stressful thinking we need to be vigilant about. That is, it's how we interpret events and what we tell ourselves about our circumstances – from deadlines to difficult people – that triggers our stress response far more than the circumstances themselves.

There's a distinct difference between *having big problems* and *making problems big*. The irony is that talking about how much stress you're feeling only amplifies your stress levels. Then, as your stress barometer goes up, your ability to cope with other events goes down – and the toll on your body, health, work, relationships and life mounts! It's a vicious cycle.

So rather than focusing on the event (or circumstance) itself, focus on how you are processing it. Consider how the way you're thinking about the situation is creating the stress, and how changing the way you think about it could reduce your stress? *Mastery of life is not the absence of problems; it's mastery of problems.*

Give up your fight with reality. Yale Psychologist Charles Morgan found that people who embrace adversity as a natural part of living are less likely to exhibit symptoms of PTSD and more likely to experience what is called “post traumatic growth.”

The reality of life is that people we love sometimes fall ill, the best laid plans fall apart, promises get broken, curve balls hit us from nowhere, and sometimes, despite our best intentions and efforts, we fail to create the outcomes we want. Such is life. Fighting against what you cannot change is a waste of energy that could be far better channeled toward improving what you can.

Invest in rituals to renew and recharge.

Resilience is far less about what you have, than what you do. Just as a car that gets regular tune ups goes further on less gas and handles slippery roads better, so too will you handle life better when you invest in rituals that enable you to reconnect to what matters most, reframe the “small stuff,” and recharge your batteries – body, mind and spirit.

Needless to say, there is overwhelming evidence that shows that people who regularly unplug and disengage to “sharpen their saw” are far more effective and productive than those who tell themselves they're too busy to indulge in such “unproductive” pursuits.”

For instance, regular exercise has been proven to increase cognitive speed, improve sleep quality and stamina. Likewise, taking a long bath or listening to music can be a smart investment of time as it helps to restore calm, reframe the small stuff and shift perspective onto what matters most.

Focus on what you can do. We cannot solve our problems by complaining about them, yet too often people waste a lot of energy doing just that.

In my book *Brave*, I wrote about the day I sat beside my brother Frank in a spinal unit as the consulting surgeon told him he would never walk again following an injury from a bike accident. As he processed the brutal prognosis, he looked over at me and declared that he would not give his injury the power to ruin his life. “There may be 5,000 things I cannot do any more, but there are 10,000 I still can, and I want to do them all.” Seven years on and I am happy to report he's well on his way!

But too often those of us whose legs work perfectly well spend far too much time stuck in “mental wheelchairs” focused on what we can't do or what we don't have or what isn't right, rather than on using the resources we do have to make things better, grateful for all that is right in our world.

So focus your energy on things that put you in the driver's seat; on whatever you can do to make things better.

Reach out for support. Studies show that people with a strong support network not only handle adversity better, but emerge from it better off. Yet often when the chips are down, or we're just going through a rough patch, our tendency is to withdraw from the very people who would most love to help us. We hate to appear weak or needy, and most people are reluctant to put others out at their expense.

It takes courage to confide in friends, share a struggle, and simply to ask for help. But it's through revealing our vulnerability that we connect most deeply with others, and in doing so, help them to be more open with us as well.

I know over the years that the strongest bonds I've forged with people have not been when life was easy, but when it was tough. So don't deprive others of the opportunity to help you. It enriches their lives as much as it does your own.

It's easy to believe that life would be easier and more fun if all the things we called problems didn't exist. **But the truth is that it's in learning how to handle our problems and rising above adversity that we learn the most about ourselves, and tap into resources that would have otherwise remained dormant.**

So before you start thinking about all the problems you wish you didn't have, consider that maybe your problems – from that difficult customer, to your daily juggling act, to that encroaching deadline – are not a problem at all. Maybe you are exactly where you need to be to learn what you need to learn to grow your “muscles for life,” your wisdom to live it more deeply, and your mastery of the challenges that still lie ahead.

Used with Permission. An intrepid Australian, **Margie Warrell** is an [Author](#), [Forbes Columnist](#) & [Keynote Speaker](#) who is passionate about helping people live and lead more bravely. Get her latest book *Brave* & take the [Train The Brave Challenge](#).