



The Human Dimension

THE LEADER WITHIN

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"We help both people and productivity flourish by developing a positive culture of shared leadership."

We find improved performance is the reward for your investing in people.

The emphasis in THE LEADER WITHIN is on the changes and growth we make within ourselves, as leadership is basically a personal growth experience over time.

'For things to change first I must change.'

How best to respond to significant management challenges:

Some of the significant challenges facing managers in companies and organisations in many countries today are how to:

- Engage and maintain motivation with employees,
- Deal with a reducing sense of accountability and personal responsibility amongst staff, the outsourcing of functions to other businesses or even other countries and how to handle a younger workforce that does not respond to the authority of the current leaders in the 'baby boomer' generation, who themselves are starting to leave in ever increasing numbers.

To top all this, there are the challenges of attracting and retaining talented, passionate people who want to stay around.

I know this is not a complete list and does not cover all situations, but it is enough to make anyone think twice about assuming a leadership role!

Many countries report longer working hours, reduction in job security and increasing part time and casual engagements and a need for flexibility in work place arrangements. Coupled with this they experience constant change and movement of people and responsibilities, as priorities and needs evolve and shift.

What can we do to best respond?

We can start with some fundamental things, which initially seem to bear little relationship to these many challenges but have a profound affect on bringing about change. The starting place is us and specifically within us. Our thinking

and the beliefs we have formed determine our actions. In other words it is our own inner world where we can gain most. We often accept that we are the way we are, as if it is predetermined and not really able to be changed. It is however our ability to learn, change and grow which makes us interesting and be better equipped to deal with new and complex challenges.

The more we understand and can experience ourselves as having choices in any given situation, the more likely we are to feel happier and more in control of life and better able to respond to various challenges. This means we have to pause to reflect, stop long enough to think about the different choices we might have and examine our behaviour from time to time with fresh eyes.

I talk a lot with leaders within our coaching relationships and we share many important and significant conversations. What helps most when we are dealing with many variables and with many matters, which we have little influence over, is to examine our paradigms or personal operating systems. How we construct our reality and beliefs about how to do things and get things done, especially in times of pressure, has often not evolved much further than what worked last time.

Often doing what works right now is the best option, however given the complexity and pressures we face, acting out of habit is neither always smart nor productive.

Instead, we need to ask ourselves 'who said it needed to be like that?' or 'who told us they were the rules or principles by which things have to be achieved?'

Whether you find you need to guide someone else, or get a better grip on your own set of challenges, you often need to find a new way of thinking or looking at your current reality.

"You can't get out of a problem with the same thinking that got you into it." That's an important notion attributed to Einstein. It is in changing our thinking, which leads to us taking different actions, which gets different outcomes.

Here are several powerful questions to help break old patterns of thinking and turn the focus to positive change.

Call to Action:

Try asking some of the following coaching questions to see how you can get assist someone to get unstuck.

"Imagine you are performing more effectively. What are you actually doing?"

"Are there situations when you were able to deal with this better? Tell me about one of those times."

"When the team was performing at its best, how would you have rated it? What was contributing to its success?"

"What was different about the way that you were behaving when circumstances were better?"

"What do you do to keep going? When you do that, who else might notice something different about you?"

"What would your boss notice when things are going well?"

"What else can you tell me about your role?"

"What else can you say is working?"

"What else could you try?"

From a manager's view, the goal of coaching is to replace ineffective behaviours with more useful or suitable ones. Making that change requires us to take a different view and break old patterns." Avoid the temptation to 'tell' or 'sell' and instead be curious and ask.

Next time you are faced with a difficult set of circumstances try some of the above approaches.

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