



The Human Dimension

THE LEADER WITHIN

June 2006

THE LEADER WITHIN © is a free monthly subscription only e/newsletter published by Gary Russell and The Human Dimension. Please pass on THE LEADER WITHIN to those in your network. Details on how to subscribe are at the end of this newsletter.

"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.'

Symptoms Of An Unhealthy Workplace Culture:

Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where there is an unhealthy culture, marked by some or all of the following symptoms:

There is little open communication, and what there is, is marked by someone doing so on 'the need to know' basis.

There is a climate of judgment, and usually you feel nothing you do or could do is ever good enough.

There are obvious favorites, and in and out groupings, based on unwritten and 'secret' membership rules.

Blame is easily apportioned and freely distributed as no one really takes responsibility.

Conflict is evident or just below the surface. There can be a lot of simmering unspoken feelings of resentment or fear of failing in some way.

Leadership is patchy or not effective in addressing the underlying causes.

Managers don't seem to care or are part of the problem.

Difficult conversations are avoided and each person is seemingly doing their own thing.

Teams essentially don't work.

Stress is high and you never really know what others are doing in their work on a day-to-day basis.

Of course productivity is down and there is little knowledge, and even less feedback, about how well you are doing.

The Solution:

The effect on both yourself and others is invariably negative, and while we do our best under these circumstances, it won't get better unless something is done to fix the causes of these problems.

Initially you are dealing with the emotional content in a difficult and challenging situation, which has been allowed to develop in unhealthy ways. A major contributing factor to an unhealthy culture is poor leadership and ineffective management over time.

Here are some initial steps we have found which help to get clear on how to move forward:

You need to be aware you are going to be dealing with perceptions, different explanations and personal 'stories' on what has happened, how it came to be like this, and what the solutions are.

Begin by acknowledging the situation is unhealthy. Arrange to meet with as many people as you can to speak with them respectfully and confidentially. What they are looking for is to be heard and understood - you do not have to agree - just listen respectfully and acknowledge the truth in the situation for them.

At this point don't provide answers or speak too much - here at this initial stage, listening is the most important skill to use. Your task initially is to show you both care and are interested in having things improve. Ask questions which encourage the person to share their experiences and to know that you will not criticize or blame them.

Your intention is to understand as much as possible about the various contributing factors, which have led to the unhealthy culture. You will only be able to do this if you listen attentively and demonstrate you are genuine.

You won't have all the answers but you can indicate your willingness to cooperate with anyone willing to move forward and who wants to be a part of the solution.

At this early stage it is not about structure, processes, or plans to move forward, but allowing each person to be heard.

Once a person feels heard they are more willing to listen to you, and at this point, you can introduce strategies to fix the problems.

It is important you refer to your teams or organisational values and there is often an agreed code of desirable behaviours.

These can form the foundation on which to rebuild and provide some of the compass you will need to navigate your way forward.

Begin to communicate and constantly clarify the kind of future and culture you want to create.

Start by inviting people to contribute to make the situation better. Say things like "It has not been easy and I can appreciate the past has led to many of you feeling it will never improve; we can either stay as we are or else make it better, I would welcome your involvement and expertise to move forward."

Some will offer their tentative support; others will have been depleted by past negative experiences and may not want to stay around. If this happens, do your best to ensure they are leaving knowing what they did well and thank them for their respective past contributions. Say things like "I know it has been tough here and I want to thank you for your honesty in letting me know of your plans, and to acknowledge that moving on is what you have decided to do".

Ultimately, the way to get people reconnected is to demonstrate what you want to see in others through your own behaviour. This aspect of your leadership is especially important in times of crisis or where you have to rebuild a team.

Call to Action:

Want to get a team unstuck or know someone who needs help to manage change differently? We would love to share our experience and have many clients who could share their experiences of what worked for them.

Get in touch and we can help to regain your sense of passion and commitment, which will ensure productivity and cultures will return to healthy levels. The cost is usually equivalent to the annual salary for an executive and our standard program is typically delivered over a 12-month period.

© 2006 Gary Russell. All rights reserved. You are free to use material from THE LEADER WITHIN eZine in whole or in part, as long as you include complete attribution, including live web site link. Please also notify me where the material will appear.

The attribution should read:

"By Gary Russell of The Human Dimension.

Please visit our web site at <http://www.humandimension.com.au> for additional articles and resources.

Written by:

Gary Russell, BSW. Grad. Dip. Soc.Sc. MCC (Master Certified Coach)

The Human Dimension Pty Ltd

Ph. 61 *2 6296 4133

Fax. 61 *2 6296 4144

Email: Gary@humandimension.com.au

Web: www.humandimension.com.au

PO Box 3083

Weston ACT 2611

AUSTRALIA

To subscribe to THE LEADER WITHIN © go to:

<http://www.humandimension.com.au/pages/contactUs/newsletter.html>