



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.'

Development Conversations versus Performance Reviews:

Most organisations have some form of performance review system in place. The outcomes are usually documented and can be done online to make the process easier. While it is helpful to have a system to review another person's performance - it can lead to a less than satisfactory conversation and interaction resulting in confusion over what exactly needs to change in order to improve. This is especially true with rating systems which are tied to financial incentives.

A typical performance review looks backwards in time (typically the past 12 months), and gives an opportunity for an employer and an employee to reflect and discuss what has happened. The employee hopes for positive feedback and a raise.

The employer hopes she will be able to create a better employee in the future. Even with these idealistic intentions, it is more often the case that both the employer and the employee leave the review simply feeling relieved to be done. After all it is part of being an effective manager!

It never feels very pleasant but it's a chore that "has to be done."

With the performance review the focus and emphasis is on performance of the person, i.e. what they did and how they did it against certain criteria.

Who the person is, their core values, aspirations, achievements, dreams, and developing an understanding of what makes them tick and motivated, becomes secondary to 'getting the job done' against certain expectations.

The alternative approach - drawn from our coaching expertise and using coaching models - where you conduct a development conversation, has the focus of the conversation and the dialogue squarely on the person themselves. It is a subtle, yet important, distinction.

Utilising a development conversation approach is based on the belief that if you develop the person then you will automatically get an improvement in performance.

If you know you are valued for who you are, that you are accepted, understood and believed in to do your best - you will! This is because you actually want to it becomes your own personal decision and resolution - not because you are being measured against external criteria. External measurement can certainly help but it has a short shelf life in terms of sustainable performance over time.

We move the underlying intention from - 'I am interested in you so that you will perform, and my continued interest in you will remain so long as you continue to perform' - to - 'I am interested in you.'

A development conversation is therefore different. It is different in intention, substance and approach to a typical performance interview/conversation.

A development conversation can be a yearly opportunity for the employer and employee to sit down together - maybe over lunch – and reflect.

It can also begin to form part of the way you naturally communicate most times you interact with staff. In this way the 'performance event syndrome' doesn't take hold.

It is the employer's job to try to "grow" the employee and to meet the needs the employee requires for that growth.

It is the employer's job to hold a vision of the big picture for the employee and find opportunities to provide time and resources to train employees towards a more senior position. In turn, the employee may see an opportunity to share with the employer about untapped skills or resources that may be valuable to the organization.

A development conversation is an opportunity to look for ways to maximize performance within the company from the point of view of the employee and employer working in collaboration.

This opportunity enables the employer to strategize on how to meet the needs of the employee in terms of growth and professional development.

It is forward thinking and solution oriented.

The development conversation is based on a mutual perspective of good intent.

This means the organization assumes it will benefit from positive employee development and will aid the employee to find solutions for development goals.

In turn, the employee assumes the organization wants her to develop as a person because there are benefits to an organization with employees who love their work.

Call to Action:

In taking this approach let the person know that you want to work with them around their strengths and abilities and that you are interested in getting to know them so that you can more ably support their growth and development.

You explain that is your job to help them be their best and that you are interested in helping them to do that.

Examples of questions you might use for a development conversation with one of your staff:

- Where do you see your future 5 years from now?
- What skills /support do you need to get there?
- What do you see within your area that impacts the company most positively?
- How can we enhance those and learn from your experience?
- What do you see within your area that impacts the company most negatively?
- What could we do to help overcome those obstacles?
- What skills and ideas do you have that we aren't currently utilizing?

Take some time to look in your organization or team to uncover where you might be able to utilize development conversations ...

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