

**Servant Leadership Focus** is a monthly newsletter to promote and stimulate servant leadership ideas and tools into the Viox culture.



## ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ **Creating We: Change I-Thinking to We - Thinking**  
by Judith Glaser
- ❖ **The Leadership Challenge**  
by James Kouzes & Barry Posner
- ❖ **Topic: Focusing on "WE" Communication**

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## TRANSFORMATIONAL STORIES

Michael J. Stabile

Over the years, I have learned that servant leaders learn to follow if they are to successfully lead. Profound and continuing changes in technology, demographics, government, and economics have made the "omniscient top-down leader" obsolete. Yes, leaders must continue to set direction, make tough decisions and choices, and inspire commitment from those who follow them. However, they must find ways to "go first" and, in doing so, to put their own unique stamp of personality and talent on the enterprise. But even that is no longer enough.

Leaders at all levels and in all situations must pay close attention to situations in which their most effective option is to follow-not because the hierarchy demands that they "obey," but because performance requires them to rely on the capacities and insights of other people.

Real leadership is about serving others. It is not about a unique or special kind of human being, but about ordinary people who have been created to do extraordinary things. Therefore, everyone in some way can lead because everyone can choose to have a positive influence. As John Maxwell, leadership writer and speaker, expounds, "leadership is influence nothing more and nothing less." A servant leader has the influence or authority to transform cultures "one person at a time."

The servant leader rejoices in the progress and success of others and ultimately their purpose is to see leaders at all levels as a result of their influence. True leaders do not maintain followers. They produce leaders because they believe that leadership potential resides in everyone around them.

## A CULTURE OF "VITAL" TEAMS JUDITH GLASER

"What differentiates a vital team from an average team is the dedication and personal commitment team members have towards truth-telling and being straight with each other."

In many cases, as teams become more vital, they will routinely recognize and confront dysfunctional behaviors as they drive towards their goals. However, this kind of personal commitment and dedication among team members takes a degree of trust that is only built over time. Members intending to be honest, trusting, and open will be more able to achieve that state over time when they develop more practiced interpersonal communication skills.

Becoming aware of where you stand in developing those skills is critical yet sometimes uncomfortable. You may notice in yourself or others unwillingness to being open and honest and take action - such as calling someone when they are not being straight, or saying what you are really thinking in a meeting, when you see someone taking over or intimidating others.

As you test out your assertiveness and try out new vital team behaviors, you may be reaching into new areas of proficiency in which you may not yet feel confident. You may have to move out of your "comfort zone."

Keep in mind that learning always entails a

certain degree of fear and discomfort in the beginning. However once you have broken through your own fear barrier, you will find that people's level of respect and trust will go up exponentially.

No matter where the team is in developing into a vital team, people working skillfully at developing open, and honest communication relationship building skills, will speed up a Team's Development. The opportunity for team development starts with individuals taking personal stock of themselves and their behavior and then making the choice to step-up. Personal awareness opens the door to better overall team communication. Asking questions like the following will help all individuals become more aware of their contribution to the team's efforts, thereby enhancing the team's performance.

### Six Questions:

- How willing am I to set the tone for trust, honesty and openness with others?
- What am I contributing to the team?
- How can I go further?
- What am I inhibiting in the team?
- What can I do differently?
- If the team is not performing, as I would like, what am I doing about it?

## ENABLE OTHERS TO ACT James Kouzes & Barry Posner

The first order of business for Jill Cleveland when she became finance manager at Apple Inc. was “to learn how to trust my employees. After being responsible only for myself for so long, it was very difficult to have to relinquish control. But I understood that in order for my employees, and thus myself, to be successful, I needed to learn to develop a cohesive and collaborative team, beginning with trust as the framework.” This is a key realization for all leaders.

### Foster Collaboration

World-class performance isn't possible unless there's a strong sense of shared creation and shared responsibility. To foster collaboration, leaders have to be skilled in two essentials.

**They must:**

- **Create a climate of trust.** To build and sustain social connections, you have to be able to trust others and others have to trust you. Psychologists have found that people who are trusting are more likely to be happy and psychologically adjusted than are those who view the world with suspicion and disrespect. Be the first to trust. Be open to influence. Share information and resources.
- **Facilitate relationships.** To create conditions in which people know they can count on each other a leader needs to develop cooperative goals and roles, support norms of reciprocity, structure projects to promote joint efforts, and support face-to-face interactions. Collaboration can be sustained only when you create a climate of trust and facilitate effective long-term relationships

## CONNECTING TO CONFRONT JUDITH GLASER

Our ability to communicate openly, with candor and caring, determines the quality of the connectivity between us as individuals, teams, or larger organizational units. While we do not always talk about our fears of speaking up candidly, we feel it. Knowing where we stand is vital to our success, and when we feel we are on the outs, it negatively impacts our performance. We start acting strangely—we protect, we hide, we defend—all because we feel we are being rejected.

*Creating the space for open and non-judgmental conversations is a WE-centric skill.* As we have conversations and listen, we are able to sort out what affects our personal future and what does not. The amygdala in our brain senses threats and tries to prevent them from harming us. It senses where we are in the pecking order, who is bigger, who is more powerful, and who is a friend or foe.

**Even thinking of the word "confrontation" causes our blood to boil, or our fears to rise.** When we think of a "confrontation" or of having a "difficult conversation" with an associate, it takes many of us to the edge of our comfort zone, and we will do everything imaginable to avoid it.

*Having a difficult conversation scares many of us into thinking we will lose a friendship, and so we avoid confronting the truth.* When we feel frustrated or angry with someone who has stood in the way of our success or undermined us and caused us to lose face—at least from our point of view—we get so upset we just can't find

among your constituents. To get extraordinary things done, you have to promote a sense of mutual dependence — feeling part of a group in which every-one knows they need the others to be successful.

**Here are three action steps that you can take to fulfill the leader's commitment to foster collaboration:**

- **Show trust to build trust.** Building trust is a process that begins when one party is willing to risk being the first to ante up, being the first to show vulnerability and being the first to let go of control. Since you're the leader, the first to trust has to be you.
- **Say we, ask questions, listen and take advice.** When talking about what is planned or what has been accomplished, it's essential that you talk in terms of our vision, our values, our goals, our actions and our achievements.
- **Get people interacting.** Create opportunities for people to interact with one another and, in the process, form more trusting, more collaborative relationships. People can't all be in this together unless you get them interacting on both a personal and a professional basis. People need these opportunities to socialize, exchange information and solve problems informally. Developing competence and building confidence are essential to delivering on the organization's promises and maintaining the credibility of leaders and team members alike. To get extraordinary things done, leaders must invest in strengthening the capacity and the resolve of everyone in the organization.

the words to express ourselves. Worse than that, we hold all our feelings inside until we boil up and over with frustration, and then we blast that person.

*Confronting others honestly requires that we all share mutually in building relationships, with all parties feeling the power of the exchange; these are power-with relationships. When we feel others want to own us or take our power away—a power-over relationship—we fear harm and cannot open up with honesty.* If we think of our conversations as a power-over experience, it's impossible to be comfortable confronting others honestly.

Additionally, when confronting another person brings up potentially volatile emotions, we move with caution and keep our real feelings close to our chest. In the most extreme cases, when in the midst of situations that stir up highly charged emotional content, most of the tension and drama are actually taking place in our own minds. We make up our "story", and this is how we see the world. It is our own personal drama of the confrontation, and our interpretation of our experience. Much of our frustration is coming from the words we use to tell this story to ourselves and to others.

- ❖ *How do we communicate with each other when we feel we are being excluded?*
- ❖ *How do we deal with others in a way that builds relationships rather than erodes them?*
- ❖ *How do we masterfully keep ourselves in a state of openness, with our assumptions and inferences in check?*

## servant Leadership focus

### Leadership for Everyone

*Leadership is not about position or title. Leadership is about relationships, credibility and what you do.*

### WE-Centric Leaders

*"WE-Centric leaders are willing to look inside and learn what they are made of. They commit to exploring the dynamics of their own human nature, and are willing to address the impact they have on their organization's culture. In doing so, they learn what it takes to create environments that enable employees to be fully engaged and motivated, to challenge and be challenged, and to face the difficult competitive issues together."*

Judith Glaser

### Coaching reminders:

Mike is available for individual leadership coaching. Call or email for appointments.  
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