

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



TRANSFORMATIONAL STORIES

Judith Glaser, author of *The DNA of Leadership*

“We studied children who lived in orphanages without family core. *What we found was that the circumstance of being abandoned was not as important as the atmosphere created by the caregivers.* When social workers gave orders to children, punished them, or, even worse, ignored them, they developed poorly, both physically and psychologically. They withdrew and focused solely on survival. On the other hand, when the environment nurtured the children and encouraged the individual expression, the children were excited about exploring and learning. Their social skills and I.Q.s advanced beyond what educators thought was possible.

Later, when I entered the business world, *I was startled to see the parallels between my research and corporate organizations.* When leaders led with a top-down style, demanded compliance with established policies and

procedures, and used threats and chastisement to achieve the goals they alone defined the internal culture. It was one where development and growth were impeded. A Silo Mentality existed whereby employees only looked up for direction and down for execution. *Territoriality and “turf wars” existed, internal competition, and blame was liberally spread around. Employees’ motivation was to survive or get out at the first opportunity.*

Enlightened executives who exhibit patterns of conversation that nurture their environments lead supremely successful companies. *These leaders engage people passionately, and provide ways for them to do meaningful work and contribute, to build quality relationships, to strive, to access resources, to influence, to innovate, and to lead in their own way.”*

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ **Coaching “Thinking” Leaders**
by Michael J. Stabile
- ❖ **Fierce Conversations**
by Susan Scott
- ❖ **Common Purpose**
by Stephen M.R. Covey
- ❖ **Topic:**
Coaching Thinking through Conversations

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COACHING “THINKING” LEADERS

MICHAEL J. STABILE

Servant leaders think about people’s thinking. In other words, to become passionate about improving not only what people are thinking about, but also the “way” they think. Thus, the role of the servant leader is to facilitate the thinking of others to help them think more effectively and productively without the leader.

In order to coach thinking leaders, we need to let the other person think through their own issue, rather than telling them what to do. This is the foundational and most important concept in this model. Once a leader gets people to do the thinking, we need to keep them focused on solutions, so that conversations are as useful as possible.

Step #1: Ask Permission to equip and empower the thinking of others. To develop self-directed thinking and learning, we first need to ask permission as a simple way of showing that you respect someone’s mental space and it creates a lot of trust. We don’t assume we have permission or rushing the other person by getting to personal too quickly, or asking a multitude of questions without making sure it is okay only leads to frustration on the part of both parties. **Here are a few examples of establishing permission:**

“I get a sense you have more to say about that, could I probe a little further?”

“Can we spend a few minutes brainstorming ideas around this?”

“I’d like to have a more open conversation than we’ve before, would it be okay if I asked you more specific questions right now?”

“I’d like to understand more about your thinking in that area, would you be okay with talking more about that?”

Step #2: Listen to Ask the “right” questions (70/30 rule.) Focus on their thinking not the issue or problem

they are addressing. The 70/30 rule is simple: listen and ask questions 70% of the time and speak or give direct response only 30% of the time. Listening is a skill and takes focused concentration and being fully present in the conversation. When we truly listen, we learn to ask powerful questions. In turn, we ask the right questions, people move to become more reflective of their own thinking and have their own insights or aha experiences.

Progressing thinking questions such as:

“How long have you been thinking about this?”

“How often do you think about this?”

“How important is this issue to you, on a scale of one to ten?”

“What priority is this issue for you in your work or life right now, top five, three, or top one?”

“How committed to resolving this are you? Or

“How motivated are you to resolving this?”

“Can you see any gaps in your thinking?”

“Are you clear about what to do next?”

“How can I best help you?”

Step #3: Clarifying—Capture the essence of what is being communicated.

Clarifying requires intense listening to catch patterns of thinking rather every detail. We are looking for what the person is trying to say and what they are not saying? What is the emotional context inside of what they are saying? What’s behind their words—what do they really feel? What is the essence of what they are saying? What can’t they hear for themselves?

Step #4) Ownership—Coach their thinking to be self-directed.

The ultimate goal of servant leaders is help others to own their own thinking and not to be dependent thinkers. *Model this process to equip and empower people so that they in turn can coach the thinking of others.*

NEVER MISTAKE TALKING FOR CONVERSATION

SUSAN SCOTT

- Talk with people, not at them.
- The more emotionally loaded the subject more silence is required.
- Use silence to slow down a conversation.
- Allow silence to fill in the greater meaning that needs to be there.
- Allow silence to teach you how to feel.

A CULTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

HENRIK IBSEN

“A community is like a ship, everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm.”

Coaching reminders:

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

Susan Scott

In Roget's Thesaurus, the word **fierce** has the following synonyms: *robust, intense, strong, powerful, passionate, eager, unbridled, uncurbed, untamed*. In its simplest form a *fierce conversation is one in which we come out behind ourselves, into the conversation, and make it real*. While many people are uncomfortable with “real,” it is the unreal conversations that should scare us because they are incredibly expensive for organizations and for individuals. Every organization wants to feel it's having a real conversation with its employees, its customers, its marketplace and with the unknown future that is emerging around it. *Each individual wants to have conversations that are somehow building his or her world of meaning.*

If you are a leader your job is to accomplish the goal of the organization. How will you do that in today's workplace? In large part, by making every conversation “fierce” you have made it as real as possible.

Begin by listening to yourself as you've never listened before. Begin to overhear yourself avoiding the topic, changing the subject, holding back, telling little lies (and big ones), being imprecise in your language, being uninteresting even to yourself. And at least once today, when something inside you say, *“This is an opportunity*

to be fierce,” stop for a moment, take a deep breath, then come out from behind yourself, into the conversations, and make it real. Say something that is true for you.

When you do, whatever happens from there will happen. It could go well or it could be a little bumpy, but at least you will have taken the plunge. You will have said at least one real thing today, one thing that was real for you. Something will have been set in motion, and you will have grown from that moment. Once you master the courage and the skills to enjoy the benefit of fierce conversations, they will become a way of life.

The Seven Principles of Fierce Conversations

1. *Master the courage to interrogate reality.*
2. *Come out from behind yourself, into the conversation, and make it real.*
3. *Be here, prepared to be nowhere else.*
4. *Tackle your toughest challenge today.*
5. *Obey your instincts.*
6. *Take responsibility for your emotional wake.*
7. *Let silence do the heavy lifting.*

CREATING COMMON PURPOSE

Joel Kurtzman

Great leaders motivate people by building a sense of inclusiveness, which is how they connect with and become accepted by the group. They create a sense of *we* by using their emotions as well as other tools—ideas, arguments, numbers and soon—in strategic and disciplined ways. A leader's authority derives from effectively balancing what only be called the near-schizophrenic task of being a genuinely accepted member of a group, while having sufficient detachment to constantly adjust course. To do that, leaders must be conscious about which emotions to display and when to display them. They must use their full set of leadership tools to create common

purpose, which is how one person impels another to act without directing that person's every move. Common purpose is what turns me into *we*.

Common purpose is a force you can almost feel. It animates great companies and great movements, and it can be summoned to propel a politician forward. When cared for, nurtured and protected, it produces an almost palpable sense of “we” that can be felt inside the company. *It is the feeling that we're all in this together and that we all know and understand what to do, why we're here and what we stand for.*

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Joel Kurtzman

Leadership is about working with your team to achieve goals. A great deal of time those goals are stretch goals and not easy to achieve. Progress requires hard work and dedication. It takes strategy and a thoughtful analysis of all the tactics that are available. **Good leadership requires an active mind.**

What this means is that one of the worst mistakes a leader can make is to become intellectually lazy. Real leaders need to take in enormous amounts of information and knowledge and to process what they take in from the vantage point of their teams and from the point of view of their organization and its mission. **They must pore over newspapers, magazines and books. They must review what's on the Web. Leaders must spend a lot of time searching for ideas.**

It may sound like a truism, but learning organizations must make learning available to everyone who works there—and that can take many forms, from office book clubs to budgets for seminars and conferences to paying for advanced degrees.

Thought leadership is not an add-on; it should be part of every firm's strategies. And although a lot of companies have adopted the words, few firms have really embraced them. *Thought leadership is a powerful form of leadership, but is not an easy form.*

To be successful, companies must be open enough and transparent enough to question everything. *Ideas must be transmitted if they are to make a difference. The more widely they are disseminated, the more powerful their effect.*