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FUTURENOW CONSULTING

SERVANT LEADERSHIP COACHING SYSTEM

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SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOCUS

A monthly newsletter to promote and stimulate servant leadership ideas & tools into the Viox culture.

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Transformational Stories

Tackle Conflicts with Conversation

By: Judith E. Glaser

I got married after only three dates. Three weeks after the wedding, we had our first fight. An extreme conflict avoider, I packed my bags and walked out. Rich chased after me. "Turn around," he said. "Let's sit down and have a conversation. There are two things we have to learn to do — one is to fight, the other is to make up." We've now been practicing both for 44 years.

Effective leadership, like a good marriage, hinges on how you deal with the tough stuff. But addressing and resolving conflicts requires enormous mental and emotional strength, which is why many of us try to avoid it. When confronted with a problem or dispute, we either move away (flee the scene, rely on others for resolution), move against (quietly using positional power to quell opposing arguments) or move toward (make nice, give in). This is natural. We instinctively want to avoid the risk of loss and social embarrassment, to stick with our points of view, to preserve relationships and the status quo.

But all three strategies are wrong-headed. When you fail to engage with a conflict, you can't gather the input you need to find a workable solution. And it hurts your image as a leader. Take Sarah, the head of IT at a global technology company. Her job was to develop new engagement technologies in her organization, but instead of embracing critical feedback on her ideas, she ignored it. When people challenged her, she would simply reiterate her points, smile, nod and move onto something else as though the issue had been resolved, leaving everyone frustrated. Team members and colleagues began to see her as a conflict avoider, and she lost their trust.

So how does someone like Sarah learn to embrace, rather than avoid, disagreement? Through my executive coaching work (and my own experience), I've developed a few conversation-centered techniques that help.

1. ***Clarify the conflict by talking through each party's stance.*** For example, "You seem to be suggesting that we really need to focus on elevating our gross revenue before we invest in a new IT strategy. Is that right?" or "It seems like we're envisioning two different levels of risk. Tell me more about what you're seeing as the downside."

2. ***Consult a neutral friend or colleague.*** Discussing the problem with someone else will make it seem smaller. The social interaction will also put you in a more collaborative, connected state of mind.

3. ***Reframe, refocus, and redirect the conversation.*** Use the conflict as a springboard to find common ground. Say something like, "Let's leave this aside for the moment and think about another way to approach the issue."

All the companies I work with have checklists of behaviors their leaders need to thrive at the top. Chief among these are courage, resilience and agility in the face of change. There's no question that an ability to manage conflict is part and parcel of all three. ***So the next time you're faced with a situation in which positions are hardened and disagreement seems inevitable, don't avoid it. Engage in conversation, and tackle the conflict head on.***

The Confrontation Principle

By: John C. Maxwell

Social Awareness

By: Anthony Mersino

The Confrontation Principle

By: John C. Maxwell

Caring for people should precede confronting people. Conflict is like a cancer: Early detection increases the possibility of a healthy outcome. While intellectually it's simple to resolve the conflict, emotionally it can be difficult. It requires honesty, humility, and dedication to the relationship.

Take these steps when confronting someone.

• Confront a person only if you care about that person. It is more productive to go into a person's interests in mind.

• Meet together as soon as possible. Putting off confrontation only causes the situation to fester.

• Seek first to understand, not necessarily agreement. The person who gives an opinion before he or she understands is human, but the person who gives a judgment before he or she understands is a fool.

• Outline the issue. Be positive, describe your perceptions, state how this situation makes you feel, and why it is important to you.

• Encourage a response.

• Agree to an action plan that clearly identifies the issue and spells out concrete steps that will be taken. The action plan should include a commitment by both parties to put the issue to rest once resolved.

Social Awareness

By: Anthony Mersino

Social awareness is the ability to understand the emotions of others. It includes the competencies of empathy, organizational awareness, seeing others clearly and emotional boundaries. Simply put, social awareness is the ability to accurately read situations and people and to understand and empathize with the emotions of others.

Empathy

Empathy is one of the most important parts of social awareness and, perhaps, one of the most critical people skills for leaders. Empathy is the ability to understand and relate to the emotions of others. It helps us walk in the shoes of another person or to see things from another's point of view.

The importance of empathy was explained perceptively in Stephen Covey's book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.* Covey's fifth habit was empathy: Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Embedded in that phrase is the simple wisdom of orienting first to the other person. A great deal of conflict that we experience on projects could be reduced or eliminated if we simply tried to understand the other person's point of view before we tried to convince them of our own message. We need to listen with the intention of understanding what others are trying to say.

One of the key applications of empathy is empathetic listening, listening without judgment. When we listen empathetically we 1) focus on the words and behaviors of another without judgment and 2) periodically summarize what they think, feel and need in the moment. Leaders who master empathetic listening benefit by:

- *Making the speaker feel valued and important.*
- *Improving the depth of the communication.*
- *Understanding the underlying emotions, which add richness to the conversation.*
- *Building trust and the relationship with the other.*

Seeing Others Clearly

For those of us who want to improve our abilities to see others clearly, here are some steps we can take:

1. Recognize Our Own Biases. We can start by recognizing that we all have biases and prejudices.

2. Practice Studying Others. We can expand our understanding of others by viewing life as a game of exploration.

3. Practice Looking for the Best in Others. Make it a regular practice to evaluate your team and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each team member.

The Three Dimensions of Conversations

By: Judith E. Glaser

We're better when we're connected!

Even though technologies enable us to dissolve boundaries of space and time and connect us in exciting ways, we still face the same old challenge: to dissolve boundaries among colleagues, to build trust, and to engage our people. **WE-centric leaders** lift people out of fear, frustration, and anger, the emotions that cause people to disengage from each other. WE-centric leaders create a culture of connection, which engages people in living the organization's highest values and most aspirational vision.

When people feel disconnected, they become reactive, project their anxiety onto others, create more fear, blame others for what is missing in their lives, reject first to avoid being rejected, and disengage. When colleagues work in concert, they learn from each other, develop higher-level skills and wisdom, meet performance goals, and turn breakdowns into breakthroughs.

Conversational Intelligence is our most powerful and human and hardwired skill of connecting with others through conversations. When leaders turn to each other to draw out our best thinking and translate that into action, we are exercising our Conversational Intelligence. When leaders engage with others, value their suggestions, and inspire new thinking, they create a community that looks forward to co-create the future.

Take a 3D View of Conversations

Conversations have three dimensions -- they are biochemical, relational and co-creational. Learn to manage these Three Dimensions (3D) and you will transform your world:

1: **First Dimension: Biochemical**: Learn to manage your own bio-reactions. When we are frustrated with others we get agitated which stimulates cortisol, a fear hormone. The more we project our negative and judgmental feelings toward others they more they become debilitated and are unable to engage in a healthy conversation about how to make things better. Our frustration may show up as bullying, intimidating, and micromanaging. These may help us release our anger or disappointment but it doesn't get results. Manage your negative emotions and make a leadershift into inspiring others to higher performance.

2: **Second Dimension: Relational**: Human beings have needs and aspirations. Needs are what we need from each other to feel good about my life and ourselves - we need respect, trust, support, caring and candor. Aspirations are what propel me forward - they are what trigger growth. I aspire to be a leader; I aspire to be a doctor.

My aspirations are how I see myself in the future and its more than just about me -- it's also about "we." When we connect with others at the relational level we become part of a powerful growth system where we are able to support each other's next steps and honor each other's identity. When we have a strong relationship with others and validate each other's needs and aspirations, our chemistry shifts in to a very positive reinforcing cycle that triggers our ability to handle difficult challenges with greater courage. This builds mutually beneficial healthy relationships.

3: **Third Dimension: Co-creational**: Focus on having Co-creating Conversations®

Co-creating Conversations are designed to enable you and others to join together to create a new reality. Learning to let go of the past and focus on the future with others will be a powerful dimension to empower you and others. When you are co-creating, you are connecting around what success looks like - mutual success. Many times we get "addicted to being right" and we get so empowered by our own ideas that we drive toward our own success. When we are addicted to being right, we are producing dopamine, which is a "feel good" hormone and we lose sight of the person right in front of us. Learn to put your ego behind you -- what matters less is what "I" can do, and what matters more is "we can do together." Conversations are "WE-centric" and they affirm the power of what we can co-create.

Mastering the Three Dimensions (3D) changes everything. Your ability to lead will increase exponentially, along with enhancing your ability to create inspiring environments where people work together for mutual gain, growth, and understanding.

Rather than getting agitated by and tangled up in conversations about blame, fear, and frustrations about what is not happening at work, you establish a positive context for transformation by engaging people in ongoing conversations about what has, can, and will work to create a transformation. In doing so, you focus on what needs to happen to address the challenges and, with that focus and commitment, YOU develop into the best company possible. Rather than trying to fix the past, or dwell on it, you focus on bringing lessons from the past forward into creating the future with others.

The Power of Conversational Intelligence

Activating your hardwired ability for powerful and transformational conversations is one of the most important competencies of a leader. Knowing how to activate this ability will enable you to shape the mindsets and experiences people have at work by reducing fear and inner focus and creating cultures that facilitate enhanced sensitivity, mutual support, vital communication, and engagement in the strategy.

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Coaching reminders:

Mike is available for individual leadership coaching.

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CULTIVATING THE VIOX WORK CULTURE