

Navigational Skills

Create a we-centric culture.



by Judith E. Glaser

WHAT IF WE COULD create organizations where

change and transformation were exhilarating and natural? Where people were devoted, engaged, and accountable to act as owners and leaders rather than visitors and blind followers? Where people worked with each other to differentiate their brand and capture the hearts, minds, and souls of customers?

Leaders are trying to make the shift from a top-down, control-driven style to a collaborative and engaging style that grows talent and attracts customers to partner in each other's success.

Many companies invest incredible time and resources into leadership and talent development, hoping to reap the benefits of a healthy, engaged, and inspired workforce.

At the heart of many leadership development programs is the desire to help leaders learn how to motivate and engage others to deliver results. Some companies focus on helping leaders become more self-aware and recognize what may cause them to derail and prevent it. Other companies focus on developing their high-potential leaders to ensure an ongoing flow of talent.

I view leadership development within a context of marketplace changes and challenges. The leader's role is to determine the competencies required for success and to help people learn how to work together to expand their ability to handle complexity and change, how to think bigger and bolder, and how to use feedback to become better navigators of the terrain.

Imagine that you *trigger this potential shift*, set the stage for growth, shape the culture so that latent talent emerges. What would that workplace look like?

Creating CHANGES

Ask yourself this question: Am I

creating a culture that enables colleagues to create the future, form feedback-rich relationships for mutual success, make beliefs transparent, and collaborate and co-create positive CHANGES?

Conversations and language. Are conversations healthy? Do people complain about others behind their backs, or do people have face-to-face healthy discussions? Is there a lot of triangulation (people using others to tell someone what's on their mind) or do people give direct feedback to others? Is there an ongoing conversation? Are people engaged in working out how to get to the end game, or are they distracted with conversations about whose fault it is that things are not moving forward? Is



there a blaming/victim culture or an accountability culture? Is the enterprise being run by fear or hope? Do people share a common language and a common reality? Can people tell the truth? Or is truth telling painful and hidden to protect people from reality?

Heart and soul. Is there a spirit of appreciation or a punitive spirit? Do leaders complain about poor performance, or are they skilled at developing talent? Do leaders provide developmental feedback? Do they recognize good work and effort, or only look for what's wrong? Do they look at the past and complain about what's not happening, or do they focus people on creating the desired future? Do they focus on problems or opportunities?

Actualization of vision. Are leaders providing direction? Often the vision is too far out for people to

grasp the implications. When guiding principles are not practiced, breakdowns occur in the actualization of the vision and in relationships between leaders and employees. Leaders communicate a vision and expect employees to implement it. What's missing is the interpretation of the vision down to the level of "what does it mean to me and what do I have to change to get there?" It also means creating benchmarks for measuring success, sharing those measures, and using them to create a culture of learning.

Networks. Are employees collaborating and bonding across boundaries? Clanning takes place when people cluster together to support each other in the pursuit of their goals. Clanning customs either strengthen or weaken the culture. Some cultures form silos, where groups of people are excluded from others by division, department, function, or sub-culture. Healthy organizations form networks that allow vital information, innovative ideas, and best practices to be shared internally and with outside vendors and customers. The mental health of the culture depends on the "wellness" of the factions and sub-cultures co-existing and co-creating together in spite of their differences. Sub-cultures need to be monitored. When teams are in conflict, there may be excessive gossip. The remedy is to bring the groups together to harmonize or expand their common perspectives. People can have different voices, but when they come together at work they need to sing a common song.

Give and take. In what ways are colleagues engaging with each other for mutual success? An enterprise depends on the sharing of resources, ideas, and practices to survive and thrive in the face of challenges. A cultural fingerprint spans the dimensions from harboring to sharing. As colleagues learn to share and trust, leaders evolve the capability of sustaining trust in the face of challenges. Cultures that encourage brainstorming with no support process for turning the ideas into reality create incredible frustration. Unmet expectations abound, and employees lose faith in their leaders and in themselves. A mature culture puts in place support systems such as Ideation and Innovation Centers. The management team resources projects designed to test and experiment new

ways. Making mistakes is okay in the spirit of discovery. People are rewarded for coming up with new products and services and turning their ideas into realities.

Enterprise mind. Is there a feeling that “we’re all in this together?” Are employees and management linked as though they were “one mind?” Are people clear about who we are and what we stand for? Are they learning from past mistakes and using them to find new and better strategies? Are they doing this in collaborative teams, or are individuals seeking credit for themselves? Is there an enterprise brand? Do employees live the brand? Do they understand it? How do they engage with customers about the brand to build its power and magnetism? Does the brand engage the hearts, minds, and spirits of employees and customers?

Spirit. Is there a spirit of discovery and inquiry in the enterprise? Are people learning from past mistakes and using them to work better and smarter? Can people let go of the past and embrace the new? Is everyone connected and working to realize a common purpose? Are they developing leadership points of view? Are leaders pushing their ideas on others (creating a culture of compliance) or are they setting the stage for people to grow their points of view (take ownership and have strong commitment)? Do people feel suppressed? What forums exist for pushing against the current rules and culture and creating the next-generation of thinking and being?

What kind of leader are you? Unaware leaders blame others for what goes wrong. Self-aware leaders look inside and explore the dynamics of their own nature, and the impact they have on their culture. They learn what it takes to create a culture that enables colleagues to be fully engaged and motivated.

Are you willing to examine your leadership and how you influence colleagues? When you influence in positive ways, you have a more profound impact on growth, and you create a culture that sustains commitment and enthusiasm to achieve audacious goals. LE

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ACTION: *Create a we-centered culture..*

Leadership Excellence