PROACTIVE LEADERSHIP

CULTIVATING GROWTH AND SUCCESS

THE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
GROUP

Table of Contents:

If You Want to Lead Change, Start Thinking of Your Employees as 'Work Stakeholders'

Want a more innovative culture? Creating a culture of innovation is on every leader's to-do list. The question is, how? How do you lead in a way that fosters flexible, future-focused thinking?

Sure, you can set up cross-functional teams and even revamp workspaces to promote collaboration and creativity. But that will not succeed if you don't change how people think at work.

For all the talk about the future of work, so many leaders are still operating from the mindset of the past. As a result, so are the people who work with them. If you want people to collaborate on reimagining products and creating new markets, let's start inviting them to be "work stakeholders." Let's stop calling them "employees."

The word "employee" is defined as "one employed by another usually for wages or salary and in a position below the executive level." It connotes a passive participant in the world of work and often comes with a set of attitudes that undermine innovation.

Work stakeholders, on the other hand, ask questions like these:

• **What do my customers (internal and external) expect?** What are the accountabilities? They are focused on creating clear results and operate with a flexible schedule. For them, it's not about filling time but maximizing time to balance their work lives and personal lives.

• **What are we committed to accomplishing? How can I best contribute?** Work stakeholders feel invested in the team's goals and in the organization's mission. They see beyond their own cubicles, view their individual tasks as part of something larger, and look for ways to partner with others to achieve more together.

THE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
GROUP

• Who is making the decision? How can I lead in my area of expertise?
Because work stakeholders are committed to the outcome, they actively look for
ways to support the decision maker with the view they have access to. Instead of
waiting for a flawed idea to fail, they speak up; instead of shrugging their
shoulders and silently saying "that's not my department," they initiate
collaborative communication if they see something that could impact the team's
success.

**• What can we learn from mistakes? How do we fail fast and get to the
best idea, process or product faster?** Work stakeholders build trust with their
team members, who collectively view mistakes as learning opportunities for the
individual and the group. Individual accountability still matters– the team relies
on everyone's individual competence to succeed together– but it's also grounded
in the belief that risk-taking, experimentation, and resilience are highly valued.

People who think like employees ask:

•**When do I have to work?** They're looking for a rigid schedule— say 9 to 5 or 2
to 10.

•**What's my job? If it's not my job, why should I do it?** There's a tendency to
confine their thinking to their cubicle instead of taking a broader view of the
team's or organization's success. They're also hesitant about stepping on other
people's toes— seeing boundaries as more important than the bigger picture of
the collective mission.

•**Who will tell me what to do?** People stuck in the employee mindset expect
top-down communication instead of looking around to see where there's a place
they could jump in. They await instructions instead of initiating conversations
across teams and other levels for ways they could have an impact.

•**What if I do something wrong? Will I be blamed?** Avoiding risks, finger
pointing, and taking a cover-up approach to work result from this mindset. This
might be the most counterproductive aspect of the employee mindset because it
limits creative thinking so quickly.

Changing how people view work is more important than revamping workspaces.
Redesigning rooms with more tables than desks will encourage people to sit
together, but that is not enough if people's thinking is still stuck in the past.

The word "employee" describes the transaction of work for money; the phrase

"work stakeholder" goes beyond that. It denotes that the participant has an interest in the success of the work. Whether you're leading a team of cashiers, software designers, or executives, it is important to communicate the value of the work being done to the overall success of the company so they can connect the dots to the big picture and what they are doing now.

In thinking about your own role and your own relationship to work, which would you find more inspiring? "I'd like you to come work for me," or, "I'd like you to partner with me in achieving this milestone of success together."

To create organizations that are future-focused, start using the language of the future. If we're serious about creating innovative cultures that can adapt to the speed of change and imagine solutions to problems existing now as well as those on the horizon, then let's invite everyone to see themselves as pioneers participating in the process of establishing new territories, and let's call them work stakeholders.

THE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
GROUP

Use These 2 Mindsets to Foster Innovative Thinking

One of my early mentors had a directive: "Always look for ways you can plus the experience."

To do this, ask yourself the question: "What could I do now that would make this experience even better, more fun for me and others?" Just by asking that question, ideas begin to bubble up and creative fun begins to flow about what you can bring alive.

You become more proactive and focused on creating solutions.

I've been using this question to focus my thinking for more than 20 years, so I know it creates a mindset that opens doors and invites innovation. Hot maple syrup with pecans on gluten free pancakes is a quick example of plus-ing a breakfast experience! When a client requests that I lead a retreat, asking this question leads me to think about where we could hold the meeting so that there would be a moment of delight for everyone participating. I put my answer into action and often volunteer my own location if I think that groups will appreciate being on a beautiful golf course. This "plus the experience" mindset creates great outcomes.

There is another mindset that also creates great outcomes: be in the experience.

Others might describe this as "experiencing the experience," "being in the now," "being present," or "being self-aware." All these phrases refer to the mental state where we are not using our thoughts to be in the past or the future. We are not fixing something. All of our attention and energy is fully present in this moment. Eating watermelon and focusing entirely on the full experience would be an example.

One of the best ways to be in the experience is to ask yourself the question, "Am I being present now?" Just asking that question brings you to now.

When we are regularly experiencing the experience, we begin to feel a sense of ease and flow in our lives. We feel calm.

Meditation is a form of this and so is sky diving — all of you is focused on the

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP

experience NOW. Playing with puppies is like that for me too! Listening to a client in a coaching conversation also brings me fully into the present moment.

Take several deep breaths, then ask yourself the question, "Am I being in this experience now?" Notice this moment for yourself.

There is a significant difference between these two mind sets.

There is a healthy tension between being present now in this moment, and thinking about what you want to create in the future that would plus the moment for yourself and others. That is the space that innovation, new product ideas, and insights about how to be a better leader emerge. To get there, we allow ourselves to toggle between the two mind sets intentionally.

Want to be a better leader? Start asking yourself these two questions:

1. What could I do now that would make this experience even better, more fun or rewarding for me and others?
2. Am I being present now?

Let your focus today toggle between these two mindsets and watch the magic you create!

Two mindsets for innovative thinking:

1. What could I do **now** that would make this experience more fun and rewarding for me and others?

2. Am I being present now?

THE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
GROUP
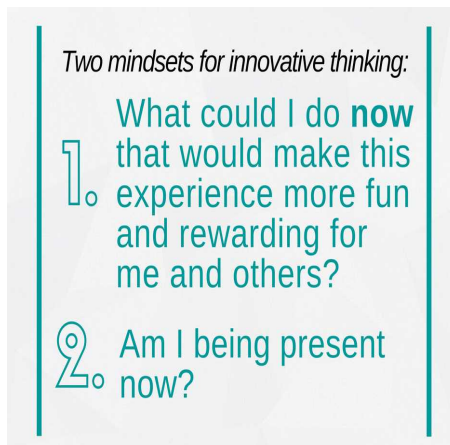
THE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
GROUP

4 Steps For Improved Listening and Leadership

Skilled leaders excel at communication. But many of us forget that the word "communicate" involves both talking and listening. We are so focused on ways for making ourselves heard that we forget that it is equally important to hear others.

By listening and asking the right questions, you can help other team members work through conflict, uncover the root causes of bad attitude, even express difficult criticism that might be vital to forward progress. When addressing a topic that is complex, emotional, or controversial with a colleague or even a client, use these deep listening steps in order:

1. **First, maintain eye contact, hear the tone of voice, the words being used by the speaker, and observe the body language the person uses while speaking.** Notice whether words, tone of voice, and the facial expressions are aligned. When these things are not aligned, the person is experiencing internal conflict with the issue being discussed.

2. **Next, ask two or three nonjudgmental questions.** This could sound like, "Hmm, that is interesting, would you tell me more? What else was happening at the time? How many people were involved? What were you feeling when that happened?" These questions show you are engaged in the conversation, and they enable you to build on what the speaker has said already. Asking questions also takes you out of being reactive or defensive.

3. **When the speaker stops talking, allow a long pause, then summarize what you have heard so far and confirm you got it right.** "What I've heard you saying is … XYZ. Have I heard you correctly?" or "You seem to be feeling … have I got that right?" Include both the content and the feeling tone of what you heard. Watch for a nod indicating that you heard correctly. Let the other person jump in to add missing details. (Now the other person feels heard.)

4. **After doing the first three steps, share your own thinking, observations, insights, and suggestions.** Make your proposal, ask for what you want, or share what you are doing. Take advantage of the opportunity to address misunderstandings or explain more clearly the

THE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
GROUP

reasoning behind a new direction or policy.

Master these 4 steps so they are automatic, and they will then be there when you sense conflict and need to find resolutions. Use these steps whenever someone shares something that involves vulnerability, emotion, or controversy, so you can avoid reacting defensively and instead allow others to feel listened to. That, more than anything, is what most employees really want.

Where Do You Want to Grow? Evaluating Your Professional Competencies

Curious about your workplace strengths and blind spots, but don't have time to wade through books on leadership or to take professional development seminars? Let me make it simple for you.

Research shows there are 5 competencies required for professional and leadership roles — you could call these "the price of admission" as you need them in place before you accept a leadership role. These professional competencies are listed below.

Now comes the self reflection part. Be honest. Which actions do you regularly demonstrate? Your ability to self evaluate is vital to your growth.

That being said, we all have blind spots. If you want a more accurate picture of your leadership potential, share this tool with a few colleagues and ask them to give you feedback. To make this easier for you, click here to download the PDF of my Professional Competencies Worksheet.

See some areas you want to improve? Choose one and make it a goal to get dramatically better in the next 30 to 60 days. Make a commitment to revisit these competencies every 3 months during 2014 to check your progress.

The real test of your leadership potential will be in your willingness to invest time and energy in overcoming your blind spots once you identify them. This could be the best gift you give yourself this holiday season!

Now is the time to take charge of your own professional development! Please let me know if the Professional Competencies Worksheet proves to be a useful tool in furthering your growth as a Star Performer and Builder of High Performing Teams.

Professional Competencies

1. Personal Accountability - Accepts responsibility; avoids blaming others; learns from mistakes; keeps commitments.
2. Self-Management - Prioritizes tasks; completes tasks responsibly; regulates emotions (channels emotions productively; thinks before taking action;

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP

avoids outbursts or blow ups that create negative emotional wake); processes feedback constructively; demonstrates self-awareness (recognizes and understands emotions and their effects).

3. Goal Achievement - Sets goals for high performance; perseveres through problem-solving to attain goals; known for getting things done; motivated to pursue goals with energy, persistence and passion beyond the need for money or status.

4. Interpersonal Skills - Interacts with others in a positive manner; demonstrates active listening; manages conflicts to successful conclusion; channels people toward accomplishing goals; cultivates a network.

5. Influencing Others - Personally affects others using collaboration, trust, integrity and ethics; adapts to work with various communication styles effectively; known for being a good listener.

WE DEVELOP
**Inspiring Leaders &
High Performing Teams**

WHO WE ARE

The Professional Development Group guides organizations to develop high performing teams and inspiring leaders. We work with leaders who want to grow their business by bringing out the best in their people, their teams, and themselves. With our clients, we create great places to work by building collaborative teams, developing star performers, and coaching leaders who are committed to growth.

SHAWN KENT HAYASHI
Founder & CEO, High Performing Teams Consultant, Executive Coach, Author

As a global expert in developing collaboration, star performers, and high-performing teams, Shawn facilitates growth in leadership ability, emotional intelligence, and communication skills – the tools needed to create strong relationships, high-performing teams, and effective presentations. She guides leaders to achieve positive, lasting changes in behavior – for themselves, their people, and their teams.

To learn more, **visit our website** and connect with us on social: