



CUTTINGS

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Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

Listening and Feedback

Some recent surveys and reports have once again highlighted not only the importance of leadership in today's environment, but the poor quality of it in most organisations.

Research by the Hay Group suggests that underachieving middle managers are costing British business up to £220bn every year. According to their report, around 38% of directors believe their organisation is in danger of being crippled by ineffective managers, and almost half said that poor management represents a serious barrier to growth. More than half felt that middle managers were not committed to achieving their company's strategic goals, while 62% complained of lack of management and leadership skills.

Senior managers owned up being part of the problem, as over two thirds of them admitted that their managers did not receive adequate training, and that with appropriate training and development, these managers could be up to 30% more effective.

Further evidence comes from 82% of executives responding to a Ken Blanchard Group survey who admitted to failing to give appropriate feedback such as praise or redirection; and 76% feeling that they failed to set clear goals or objectives.

So where do we start in order to improve? As Rob Goffee points out, feedback is the key. He is convinced that good leaders should both give and ask for feedback, however high up the hierarchy they are. "Unless you get feedback from others, how do you know you're doing a good job?"

But with 81% of leaders in the Blanchard study being criticised for not listening properly, feedback is not easy. Possibly because in our culture, feedback is nearly always seen as criticism, and therefore negative.

It doesn't need to be that way – experience from the sports arena and from Gallup tells us that focusing on what people do well and enhancing strengths actually brings more

performance improvement than trying to isolate and correct weaknesses.

One other very good reason for leaders to build their listening and feedback skills comes from a survey on employee engagement by ISR Global Research. They found that the one critical component for helping to engage employees is to provide a convenient way for employees to express their concerns, ask questions and provide overall feedback to the organisation. And we know from the Gallup and other research that there is a direct correlation between employee engagement and the bottom line.

So if we are serious about wanting to improve performance, it seems that building skills in listening and feedback for middle and senior managers is key.

*Are coaches working hard enough? Brief Group newsletter
Communicating Leadership / The route to authentic leadership, TJ November 2006
Effective Employee Feedback Fosters Engagement, ISR Global October 2006*

5 Questions to Ask Yourself (Before You Leave Work Today)

1. If this was your last day on Earth, and you had to spend it at work, what would you do differently?

How would you go about your tasks? What would you do to find meaning in those waning hours? Whom would you talk with? What would you say? Now think about your answers. There's a 99.999% chance that you'll have the gift of another day tomorrow. How will you make the most of it?

2. What did you learn today?

If your work is fairly routine, you might feel like your brain is on permanent standby. So take charge and look for ways to learn. Have a first-time conversation with a customer. Approach a colleague and ask for a quick lesson on the new software. Volunteer for that upcoming project. Walk over to a different department

and meet some new people. The opportunities are there, but you have to step forward and seize them.

3. What did you teach today?

Teaching is the best way to learn, and it's also a great way to serve. Right now, think of three things you know that others in your workplace would benefit from knowing. Maybe it's a piece of information. Or an insight. Or a perspective. Or a talent. Don't diminish yourself. What you know is significant, and you can strengthen your workplace by sharing it with colleagues.

4. What stories did you tell today?

People tell stories all the time in informal conversation, even if they don't call it "storytelling." Over months and years, an accumulation of stories does more to build a workplace culture

than anything else. If your stories are full of criticism, scepticism, or cynicism, you're doing damage. If you're staying silent, you're missing an opportunity. Look for what's going right -- and talk about it.

5. Who benefited from your work today?

Many people are so busy with tasks and deadlines that they have trouble getting inspired and engaged. So do this: On your way home from work today, ponder your purpose. Think about the people who ultimately benefit from what you do and how you do it. Keep thinking as tomorrow and the next day unfold. With enough reflection, you'll find your mission -- or a mission will find you.

Tom Terez 5 February 2007 HR.com

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Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations ...

- ✂ "Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it" *Maya Angelou*
- ✂ "When you are through changing, you are through." *Bruce Barton*
- ✂ "I put a dollar in one of those change machines. Nothing changed." *George Carlin*
- ✂ "Anything that is of value in life only multiplies when it is given." *Deepak Chopra*
- ✂ "First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Then they fight you. And then you win." *Mahatma Gandhi*
- ✂ "It was impossible to get a conversation going; everybody was talking too much." *Yogi Berra*
- ✂ "Dream as if you'll live forever. Live as if you'll die today." *James Dean*
- ✂ "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." *Mark Twain*
- ✂ "Life is a great canvas - throw all the paint on it you can." *Danny Kaye*
- ✂ "In times of change, learners inherit the earth while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists." *Eric Hoffer*
- ✂ "Knowing yourself, being yourself and disclosing yourself are vital ingredients of effective leadership" *Rob Goffee*
- ✂ "To acquire knowledge, one must study; but to acquire wisdom, one must observe." *Marilyn vos Savant*
- ✂ "First learn the meaning of what you say, and then speak." *Epictetus*
- ✂ "Nothing is more confusing than people who give good advice and set bad examples." *Norman Vincent Peale*
- ✂ "Nothing is more terrible than activity without insight." *Thomas Carlyle*
- ✂ "If you don't like something change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it." *Mary Engelbreit*

And worryingly...

- ✂ "If we don't succeed, we run the risk of failure." *Bill Clinton*

A Parable from India

A woman came out of her house and saw 3 old men with long white beards sitting in her front yard. She did not recognise them, but said "I don't know you, but you must be hungry. Please come in and have something to eat."

"Is the man of the house home?", they asked. "No", she replied. "He's out." "Then we cannot come in", they replied.

In the evening when her husband came home, she told him what had happened. "Go tell them I am home and invite them in!"

The woman went out and invited the men in.

"We do not go into a House together," they replied.

"Why is that?" she asked.

One of the old men explained: "His name is Wealth," he said pointing to one of his friends, and said pointing to another one, "He is Success, and I am Love." Then he added, "Now go in and discuss with your husband which one of us you want in your home."

The woman went in and told her husband what was said. Her husband was overjoyed. "How nice!!", he said. "Since that is the case, let us invite Wealth. Let him come and fill our home with wealth!"

His wife disagreed. "My dear, why don't we invite Success?"

Their daughter-in-law was listening from the other corner of the house. She jumped in with her own suggestion: "Would it not be better to invite Love? Our home will then be filled with love!"

"Let us heed our daughter-in-law's advice," said the husband to his wife.

"Go out and invite Love to be our guest."

The woman went out and asked the 3 old men, "Which one of you is Love? Please come in and be our guest."

Love got up and started walking toward the house. The other 2 also got up and followed him. Surprised, the lady asked Wealth and Success: "I only invited Love, Why are you coming in?"

The old men replied together: "If you had invited Wealth or Success, the other two of us would've stayed out, but since you invited Love, wherever he goes, we go with him."

Wherever there is Love, there is also Wealth and Success!

Posted by Parashu Ram on the AI Listserv, March 2007

Common goal or legal contract?

Padmakumar Nair of the University of Texas at Dallas makes an interesting observation for those involved in outsourcing.

The Toyota community works though a common goal rather than a well-written legal contract. If you compare the way Toyota and GM deal with their suppliers, GM's cost of legal documentation and contracting for these relationships is eight times more than that of Toyota. Toyota may appear to be taking a big risk in the free marketplace by not making legal contracts intact and clear. But at the same time they are saving a lot of money by not having those contracts.

For how much money, Nair cites another example: JP Morgan Chase recently took back the IT services they outsourced to IBM after identifying that about 30% to 40% of employees time was spend on making sure that the contract terms are met that the service level agreements are obeyed. Not only is this not adding any value, it's a new cost that exists in the outsourcing arrangements that did not exist before.

So do you trust or contract?

Interview by David Creelman, HR.com

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