



SUMMER 2013  
**ISSUE**

# Solutions

PRACTICAL PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES TO HELP DEVELOP THE BEST IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS  
FROM THE CENTER FOR MANAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## FEATURE ARTICLE

By Jon Wortmann, Jay Therrien, and Tom Endersbe, authors of *The Three Commitments of Leadership: How Clarity, Stability and Rhythm Create Great Leaders*. Used with permission.

# The best leader in the world: It could be you

The faster the world moves, the more disasters happen everywhere, the more we put our heads down to just keep our organizations functioning. We've gotten really good at tasks, we're masters with spreadsheets and data analysis, and our teammates know how to nail the mechanics of what they do. What about their ability to collaborate? Will they take the risk of saying what they really think to those with more power? Can they lead? We're very good about growing technical savants, but we often fail to unleash their leadership talent.

Whether you have a formal leadership title or not, chances are you're reading this because you're a natural leader. You're the kind of person who steps up and steps in when others need you most—or you want to. As daunting as leadership can be, what you need to do is straightforward. We're going to give you a model that will make you the kind of leader whose team people beg to join; and the kind of person who develops other leaders as a natural part of your every day work and life.

## Why do you lead?

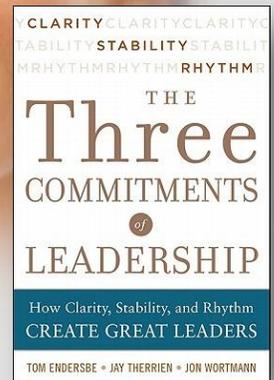
Becoming the kind of leader people love to work with, and then developing a team of leaders begins with you knowing why you lead. Some people lead for the rewards, others because they see a problem that needs fixing that no one is doing anything about. Some people lead because they love the challenge of gathering and organizing people.

Many of us were taught that being a leader is the highest height of a career. There is no wrong answer to why you lead, but the best leaders in the world know why they will endure real suffering to struggle to reach for noble goals. Your answer simply has to be so true, so deep, that it will buoy you during the dark days and sometimes years and decades when things go painfully wrong. Don't let anyone ever tell you different; leadership hurts. Leading may be the most difficult thing you ever do.

*This article continues on the next page.*

**I LONG TO ACCOMPLISH A GREAT AND NOBLE TASK,  
BUT IT IS MY CHIEF DUTY TO ACCOMPLISH SMALL TASKS  
AS IF THEY WERE GREAT AND NOBLE."**

— Helen Keller,  
American Writer and Political Activist



# The best leader in the world: It could be you

Continued from Page 1

Examples of leadership challenges are everywhere. You run a company, a division, or a team, and there's always more to do. You're a principal or a teacher and the kids keep hanging on your doorknob needing more of you. You're a politician and you can't even begin to keep everyone happy. Your community needs you, and there is no leadership role where the work is ever finished. It hurts to be the one who has to make sure the ship doesn't sink. It's a pain to be the principal in the sandbox as all the children make a mess of what you know is possible. There is nothing more important for leaders than to take responsibility and there is nothing more arduous.

The loneliness of the leader is real. The sleepless nights and anxious days are an unavoidable part of truly caring deeply about what happens next. However, if you know why you lead, you can immediately switch your focus from the pain and drama to the core motivation that moves you to take risks and do the difficult work. Leadership is excruciatingly difficult, but none of us needs to lead alone.

## Are you a leader people beg to work with?

A commitment is a promise and a pledge that binds us to what we're trying to achieve. In leadership, a commitment is a declaration about what we'll pour all our energy into making happen, and in some circumstances, even give our lives for. Wait... did we just write "give our lives for?" When you look at the impact of what stress and long hours do to us, it's what we do every day. We're giving our precious energy to something; your energy is your life. Where you're spending your time and energy each day is what you're giving your life to, and we don't want you to waste a moment.

But what great leaders commit to may not be what you expect. It's not the cause that keeps people wanting to work with a leader. Those devices buzzing in our pockets connect us to a world of distraction and need. At work, in politics, with our volunteer time, we will quickly bounce from even the most important causes when the experience of working on them isn't satisfying. We have too many options.

## THE 3 COMMITMENTS

The best leader in the world makes three straightforward commitments that help them create an environment where people want to work together and value the experience so deeply they keep coming back.

### CLARITY

They have mastered how to interact with people. Most leaders want to tell people what to do and have them do it. That's normal, and in the end it never works. Clarity is discovered, not forced. It starts when we get clear in the core areas of what we do—strategy, goals, results—and then openly share information. And there is a second, equally essential way to fulfill the commitment: seek answers together. Great leaders know how to figure out what their people really want to do, and give them clear targets that meet their personal goals as they fulfill the organization's objectives. They know how to take any problem and make it a team challenge rather than just one leader's responsibility.

### STABILITY

They know how to offer all the resources teammates need, and as they do, build a culture of trust in their organization where people realize that nothing is out of bounds. Trust is not a soft word for leaders who know how to create it. When people can say what they really think, and then teams figure out what they need to reach new levels of success, no idea is lost and new possibilities emerge every day. Trust is the essential precursor for teammates to build their confidence so they'll take risks.

### RHYTHM

They know how to reduce or eliminate distractions for their people, so results happen as stress is reduced. The patterns of our lives produce the flow of effort and experience that generates our best outcomes. The best leaders pay attention to how the work happens and how to support teammates without getting in the way so everyone builds a consistent cadence of effort and renewal. Think of Edison and his 1,093 patents from a lab that hummed with teams of inventors for decades and birthed General Electric.

## Why these three commitments?

Using these three commitments to build a team of leaders emerged from our frustration with many leadership development programs that were available to us. We realized that what we were teaching wasn't working, so we looked at what great leaders were doing and broke down the simple realities that each of us need to stay focused on—what matters most.

In the midst of days where we have too much to pay attention to—and triggers stressing us out from every direction—leadership programs may ask us to learn too much. We may be able to apply leadership theory in the classroom, but under pressure...in the midst of a stressful day?

What leaders need to do to be the kind of people others love to work with is straightforward. The best leader in the world commits to clarity because she knows what success looks like. She listens to others definitions of a better future, and she wants to build it with a team that discovers together how to make their goals a reality.

She commits to stability because she knows what people need and how to create work and life experiences where people trust each other and want to repeat the feeling they get working together every day. She commits to rhythm because she looks out for what will get in the way, and she both clears paths for her team, and trains them so they are as capable as she is of overcoming obstacles.

To commit is to pay attention. Because leading is never easy, we realized we all need three sticky words to focus on.

Whether the world is on fire and we have to keep people safe, or we're in the middle of the ordinary grind and we want people to be their best, these three commitments are the essential elements of an environment where people savor working together and produce their best work. Breaking down leadership into three core commitments means you never have to think about how to lead—because you have three words to focus on you will never forget.

*This article continues on the next page.*



...there's no  
need to yell!

Want to undermine your authority as a manager or competence as an employee: Lose your temper. The ability to get your message heard without yelling is critical to your overall success in the office. Here are five ways to be clear without raising your voice.

**Make it impersonal.** If you're disappointed and upset about a situation, focus on the situation, not the person involved. Compassion in any situation will always serve you much better than yelling or being overly emotional. A parent might make criticism personal by saying they are disappointed in their child, but at work keep it about the business, not the person at hand.

**Change your tone.** Even though you're not yelling, you can and possibly should use a noticeably tougher tone than you would generally use. The point of view or criticism needs to be discussed not only in a logical and rational manner, but also in a steady tone of voice that helps demonstrate the seriousness of your comments. A calm, yet urgent, tone will help you communicate your message more effectively than a panicked or angry one.

**Get to know your colleagues.** If you're constantly butting heads with certain people, get closer to them even if your instinct might be to avoid them. Ask them for assistance in certain areas where you respect their opinions, and thank them for it. Look for areas of common ground, and you'll soon be working together and forming a stronger and more efficient team. That common ground will get you through inevitable conflict that arises in the future.

**Know when and how to de-escalate things.** Just because you have good, even-tempered intentions doesn't mean things won't get heated in the future. But you can recognize a situation and defuse it by taking a step back. "If you find yourself caught in the moment, buy yourself some time and ask more questions, take a deep breath, and regain your composure," says Susan Steinbrecher, CEO of management consulting firm Steinbrecher & Associates. "Come to understand a situation—look at the big picture, then the details. You'll be respected and admired as a leader, as well as taken seriously."

**Clarify the facts.** If someone says something that angers you, be sure that you're reacting to the right information. "Give the person the opportunity to repeat what they just said just in case you misunderstood," suggests Jayne Mattson, senior vice president of Keystone Associates, a career consulting firm. If you disagree with their repeated statement, say so emphatically (see the above point about changing your tone). They'll get the message that you've tried to understand their point, and they might do the same for yours.

## The best leader in the world: It could be you

Continued from Page 2

### Does your culture embody the Three Commitments?

Once you know why you lead and you make the three commitments for yourself, the final step before building your team of leaders is making sure your culture is the kind of environment where true leadership is valued. All cultures can embody the three commitments, but some are so stressed, political, and embedded in old patterns that the transformation takes years. The commitments are not just how you become a great leader, they are also a simple assessment—a lens for looking at the places where you lead.

You can tell whether an environment is ready to grow leaders with three simple questions:

1. **Is everything clear?** Goals, best practices, expectations.
2. **Is everything stable?** Resources, training, the culture.
3. **Does your work have rhythm?** Predictable patterns, engagement, and even a happy cadence of work that draws people in each day?

Instantly, the three commitments reveal why a culture or organization is struggling, and where to focus your attention as a leader to make a difference. You have answers about how to create more clarity, stability, and rhythm for you and your organization. Is your organization open to more of what you know is possible? The best leader in the world is always looking to improve their culture, even when facing others who don't want to change or don't know they need to.

You may want to build a team of leaders, but you can't if your environment is not open to supporting their development. For instance, if you don't have a development plan for every teammate, no matter how much they like you, or how enthusiastic they are about what you do, they'll eventually struggle to see where your work together benefits their growth. Their lack of clarity created by your lack of a clear path to success leads to a destabilized environment for them and any rhythm they develop gets blocked by worries about their future.

On the other hand, when every employee is clear about what they want, how it ties to their daily work, where they can keep improving, and how you'll help them develop, then you have an environment committed to each person's growth and happiness. A culture that embodies the three commitments is ready to develop teams of leaders.

### The Forgetting Curve and leadership development

Would you be happier as a leader or a member of a leadership team if you knew that everyone was just as committed and capable of producing results as you are? It's not that we don't want a great team of leaders to support us, we just have a hard time getting everyone else there with us. We're too busy and often too distracted. We attempt to instill the essential traits of great leadership—but fall victim to the forgetting curve.

The German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus discovered the speed at which we forget in 1885. He created a series of nonsense sounds that didn't have a previous history or meaning to him, and he studied them. He then recorded the rate at which they left his memory. His research revealed that we lose information fast if it's not practiced.

*This article concludes on Page 5.*



# The Letter Department: Regaining your manager's trust

Dear Solutions,

I am struggling to regain my supervisor's trust. I have made some errors—of omission, mainly—and my supervisor has spoken to me about it. There are some extenuating circumstances, but the bottom line is that my supervisor expects me to do my job, and I'm trying to do it the best way I can.

Unfortunately, as a result of my recent "slip-ups," my supervisor is micromanaging me all the time—watching everything I do. I want to do better, but I am always looking over my shoulder, wondering what may happen next. I know that fear and anxiety can create more mistakes, and I'm afraid I've created a dangerous pattern.

What can I do to regain the confidence and trust of my supervisor and get out from under the microscope?

...*Trying to be Trustworthy*

Dear Trying,

Thanks for your question. You've already avoided two mistakes that keep many of us stuck. You've accepted that you aren't perfect, and you aren't blaming others for your problems. You are taking responsibility, and that puts you on the right track.

Here are some things to consider:

### Examine your current situation.

You are telling yourself a very anxiety-provoking story—that your boss has you under a microscope, searching for errors, with the intent of something worse happening down the line. Are you sure this story is correct? Check your assumptions by asking yourself two questions:

"Do I really have all the facts I need to be sure this is what's really happening?" and "Is there any other possibility that could fit your situation?"

In particular, ask yourself whether you are misreading your supervisor's motives. We tend to see the worst, rather than the best, in others' motives. What if your supervisor is rooting for you to succeed and sees micromanagement as "helpful coaching"?

### Clarify your intentions.

It's also possible your supervisor has misread your motives, so make them clear. Draw a line between your past errors and your new situation. Sometimes, an apology can be a good way to draw this line and make it clear that your motives are aligned with those of your supervisor. In addition, do your best to remove any lingering doubts your supervisor might have about your extenuating circumstances. Explain how you've resolved or stabilized them so they won't undermine your work going forward.

### Take the initiative.

Act as if your supervisor is providing helpful coaching, and become the eager learner who is striving to reach perfection. When she searches for errors in your work, tell yourself she is trying to help and make an effort to learn from her. Use these times to ask her about her priorities, and to offer your help. Use this period to become the very best at your job.

### Trust comes from sacrifice.

Here is the hard part. Meeting the requirements of your job won't be enough to create the trust you want from your supervisor. Personal trust comes from going "above and beyond" what is required—from making a personal sacrifice to showing your support for your manager's goals. Often, this sacrifice is of time, effort, or other priorities.

For you, it might mean volunteering to do a job nobody likes to do, spending extra time on a task that needs to be done, or getting up to speed on a skill that's difficult to master. Work to create a reputation for doing more than what's required.

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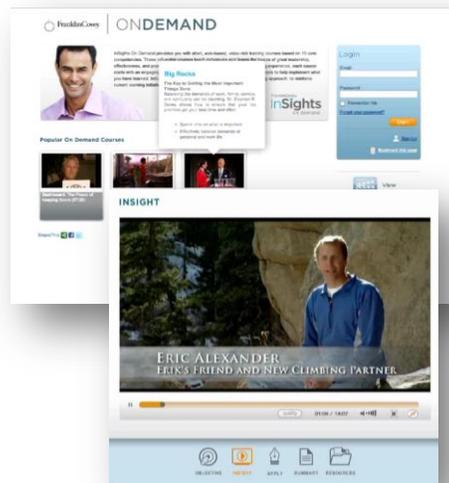


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# The best leader in the world: It could be you

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Whether you're a leader in a corporation, government, or public service, here's the continual challenge: if it's been twenty minutes since you or your people reviewed or practiced the new skill or habit you just taught them, they've already forgotten 40 percent of what you told them.

That new set of requirements you just delivered at your weekly team meeting—if it's been an hour—they've already lost nearly 60 percent of the information. Two days from the first time you help someone learn what they need to know to be a brilliant leader, without review or practice, they'll retain about a quarter of it.

And there's another reason we're not developing leaders. There is a cultural myth that leaders are born with the "stuff" needed to inspire and rally the troops. This myth is dangerous. It covers up the work great leaders do to become who they are.

If you want to be the best leader you can be, you have to practice. If you are a leader or manager in any organization and you want to create a team of people who can lead as well as you can, they have to practice too.

The simple measurement for who on your team is ready to be a leader? How much do they practice? To be a top-performer, the people who practice are almost always the best. Want to know if someone is ready to lead—find the people who regularly practice the skills of their job.

But what we practice to be great leaders can't be complicated. Here's the story we keep hearing: "I picked up this awesome book on leadership at the train station. I read it in one sitting." We then ask: "How did it change you?" The repeated reply is: "I don't remember any of it." The content is actually wonderful. The stories, exercises, and models are both theoretically and philosophically valuable. If we had more time—and if, as the new studies reveal, we weren't working 50, 60, 70, and sometimes even 80 hours a week, we might be able to apply the idea. The simple fact is we can't or don't. Even the best intentions to practice can be squashed when we don't apply the knowledge in a sustainable way.

The best way to make the practice a regular habit: find your team of leaders and practice together.

## Your team of leaders

**To build a team of leaders:**

1. We reflect on why we want to lead.
2. We make three commitments to become the kind of leader people love to work with.
3. We make sure our environment is ready to fulfill the three commitments.
4. We find the people who know how to practice.

Then, we ask them "Why do you want to be a leader?" They have to know their core motivation. We have to know their core motivation as a first exercise in becoming clear about why we want to work together through the ugly and brilliant days.

Next, ask them to apply the three commitments to their work. Each day, ask your teammate to determine where they can create a little more clarity, stability, and rhythm.

It's similar to the idea of *Kaizen*—the philosophy of constant improvement first implemented in Japan where the goal is to make a small improvement each day. The difference for leaders is that we can't just make any improvement. We have to make improvements in areas that create an environment that attracts, trains, and retains talented people. We have to establish a culture where people know what's expected and feel safe enough to take the risks to fulfill those expectations.

We have to build organizations where people can see the challenges and opportunities around them, feel empowered, and know that each day they can impact their progress toward the goals they desperately want to achieve.

When you have a team of people that knows why they want to lead, they won't quit when the work gets hard and you can remind them of their core motivation when they forget under the strain and pressure. When you can talk about how to fulfill the three commitments, you know that together, every day, you're creating the environment for what you want to happen.

And you know what the biggest change will be? Instead of the political snake pits that teams can become, instead of the emotional soap operas organizations begin to act out, you and your teammates value each other and truly make things better.

## Teams of leaders are all around you

When Mother Theresa began feeding the poor and caring for the sick, she had a few nuns. When she died, she had almost 5,000 monks and nuns committed to the work she began. Martin Luther King Jr. or Rosa Parks didn't lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott. They had a team of 50,000 leaders who wanted to bring freedom. Nelson Mandela, Susan B. Anthony, George Washington—name a leader who fought for freedom and they had a team of leaders who made their accomplishments possible.

We still give credit to those who have the courage to stand up and speak, but the leaders who build teams never take the credit alone. We have to do the same. In a world where the trouble is global and the needs are endemic, at work and in our communities, we can make every teammate, every neighbor a member of our team. That doesn't mean we suddenly all agree and like each other. That doesn't mean we immediately reach our goals. It means in every goal we pursue and every action we take, we know we are not alone.

*Together we can be a team of leaders, committing to pay attention to what people need to love working together, until the clarity, stability, and rhythm we all need is a part of every human life.*

### About the Authors

**Jon Wortmann** is a non-profit leader, leadership coach at Muse Arts, LLC, and author. He was trained at Harvard University and has consulted with and offered workshops for educational, non-profit, start-up, and Fortune 100 organizations. **Jay Therrien** has led learning and development at three Fortune 500 companies, where his programs and content continue to serve as a core component for the leadership, communication, and professional development training used by thousands of employees at those companies today. **Tom Endersbe** is the former Head of Field Implementation and Training at Ameriprise and CEO of a Financial Advisory Practice. They are all three authors of *The Three Commitments of Leadership*, released by McGraw-Hill.

# TECHNICAL JOURNAL

## Office 2007 Tips

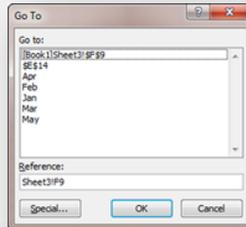
From the Center for Management and Professional Development's  
Computer and Technical Skills Training Team

### The F5 Hotkey

The F5 key is a great shortcut key in many of the Office programs for everything from navigating, inserting named ranges into formula, and starting a slide show. Here are some examples:

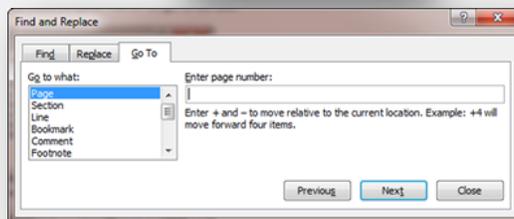
#### F5 Hotkey in Excel

In Excel, pressing F5 will bring up the dialog box listing past locations, name ranges, objects, worksheets, etc. Double click an item from the list to go to that location. F5 can also be used to access and insert name ranges in a formula. As you are typing in your formula, press F5 and then double click on your name range to be use.



#### F5 Hotkey in Word 2010

Pressing F5 in Word 2010 will launch the Find and Replace dialog box and in particular the Go To tab. From here you can navigate to various places in your document such as pages, sections, bookmarks, headings, etc.

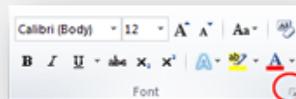


#### F5 Hotkey in PowerPoint 2007

Pressing F5 from any place in PowerPoint will launch a slide show starting with the first slide.

### Change the Default Font in Word 2010

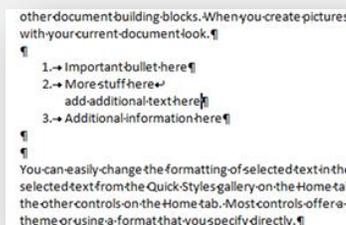
The new default font "Calibri" is nice, but you may not like it and want to revert back to the familiar Times New Roman or Arial. Here's how:



- With Word open, click the **Home** tab.
- In the **Font** group, click the **Font** dialog box launcher in the lower right hand corner.
- In the **Font** section, change the **Font Style**. If desired, change the **Font Size**.
- At the lower left-hand corner of the **Font** Dialog box, click **Set as Default**.
- Click **Yes** when prompted to change the default.

### Insert non-numbered line in a list

Sometimes you need to add text below a numbered or bulleted item without creating another number or bullet. If you just press Enter at the end of a line, Microsoft Word will automatically insert the next item in the series with an accompanying bullet point or number.



There is an easy solution using the keystrokes below.

1. Click at the end of the line
2. Hold down the **Shift** key
3. Tap the **Enter** key
4. Add your text
5. When you want to add the next sequential number, hit the **Enter** key again.

**Note:** This is also handy when you are working with bullets in PowerPoint.

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## DR. ZIMMERMAN'S COMMENT

### "Management is a profession; leadership is a condition."

Tom Peters, business author

In essence, Peters was saying that managers and leaders act differently. True enough. But I would add that managers and leaders serve different purposes too. And both are needed in every organization.

So what's the difference? Let me give you a portion of the checklist I give my clients when I'm delivering my training programs.

#### Leaders create the vision. Managers implement the vision.

Leaders look into the future and "see" a better, brighter way. They create a positive vision, and they lead the charge toward that vision with a spirit of optimism.

Wayne Ferch, the CEO of Feather River Hospital in Paradise, California, talks about that. Ferch says, "Great leaders lead with optimism, even when they don't feel optimistic. In fact, if a leader is positive about the future, and the staff buys into that vision—there is a good chance of success, but no guarantee. However, if the leader is negative about the future, and the staff picks up that negativity—it is guaranteed that there will be no success."

So the leader has to do more than "create" the vision. He has to "instill" the vision. Or she has to help others "catch" the vision by using a variety of communication tools.

And at the same time, managers are busy implementing the vision. The rubber hits the road when managers organize their resources and make sure things get done that are in line with the leader's vision.

#### Leaders are a force for change. Managers are a force for continuity.

Even though leaders start with vision, they know that vision in and of itself is not enough. They must also be a force for change. One of the pre-eminent doctors in America, Dr. Nicholas La Russo, director for the Center for Innovation at the Mayo Clinic, teaches that. He says, "The most effective leaders are pragmatic visionaries. They not only see where they need to go but they figure out how to get there."

Of course that's not easy. To be a force for change, leaders have to add perseverance and integrity to their vision too. Jean Rush, the president of CIGNA, one of the most successful Medicare providers in the country, says, "In today's world, a successful leader must have perseverance and integrity: perseverance to weather the multitude of challenges that confront organizations and individuals today, and integrity so people trust their leader to do the right things for the right reasons."

Whereas leaders are a force for change, managers are a force for continuity. Both are needed. Jack Welch, the former chairman of the General Electric Company, knows that better than most people. He says, "A manager controls things, keeps them in channels, builds and respects boundaries between functions and ranks, and stays within internal and external company walls." Indeed, without that force for continuity, organizations would fall into chaos and eventually self-destruct.

#### Leaders empower people. Managers coach people.

As noted in one of the Successories' posters, "True leaders are the first to see the need, envision the plan, and EMPOWER the team for action." They believe in their team members' ability to actualize the vision, and they encourage their team members to move forward and do it. In other words, they MOTIVATE their followers.

One of the ways leaders motivate their followers is by putting the limelight on them. They don't hog all the glory and attention for themselves. As the same poster goes on to say, "True leaders are not those who strive to be first but those who are first to strive...and who give their all for the success of the team."

A successful leader creates a working environment that truly MOTIVATES people to do the best job possible. A successful leader who regularly communicates with his people...who demonstrates respect for individuals and appreciation for their work...will build an organization that is well positioned to capitalize on opportunities to prosper... even when the times are tough.

But motivation without education serves no useful purpose either. Without some training and skill development, the followers may not be capable of actualizing the vision.

That's where managers come in. Managers are needed to make sure the followers get all the knowledge they need, learn all the necessary procedures, and master the soft skills that are critical to every organization's success. Managers do all that as well as coach and nudge their team mates towards higher levels of performance and better overall results.

#### Leaders build relationships. Managers build projects.

General Douglas McArthur knew that. As one of the great U.S. generals in World War II, he was able to elicit tremendous loyalty from his troops; and he was able to win extraordinary victories because of their loyalty.

In trying to understand the key to McArthur's highly effective leadership, William Manchester studied McArthur in depth and eventually summarized his findings in his book, "The American Caesar." He said McArthur "adored" his troops. He respected them, believed in them, talked to them, listened to them, and built relationships with them.

There's the old cliché that says "It takes two to tango." That's especially true in organizations. We need both leaders and managers.

But perhaps we should change the cliché to say "It takes three to tango." We need all those coworkers out there to be on the same team as the leaders and managers to get anything done.

### Action:

Look at the four things a leader does. Then take a look at how well you do those four things.

Give a #1 to the item you are best at, and a #4 to the item you most need to improve.



## Delivering employee feedback in sensitive situations

At some point, every supervisor will face a tough situation where they have to give uncomfortable feedback to an employee. In those moments, it can be hard to know what to say and easy to say the wrong thing. Here's a quick guide to three tricky situations and how to handle them effectively:

### **An employee wants a promotion but isn't ready.**

With any employee looking to advance, position yourself as a coach trying to help them find success. If the employee views you as the one person standing in the way of their promotion, it definitely won't help with the discussion.

Start the discussion with questions. Ask, "Why do you feel that you are ready for this promotion?" "What will this help you accomplish in the long run?" "What are your current professional priorities?" Your goal is to understand where the person is coming from and where they hope to go so that you can help them bridge the gap.

Often, employees overlook some very important skills that aren't usually listed in a job description—things like taking initiative, acting as a mentor to others, or thinking strategically about the future. Help them grow by clarifying what those skills are and provide specific suggestions about how to demonstrate them. Focus on what they can do to improve. Let it be a discussion.

### **An employee is a good worker but clashes with the team.**

Interpersonal issues are sensitive, so listen to understand the employee's point-of-view. To do that, bring up a specific situation and start by asking what they intended to communicate or accomplish by doing or saying what they did. Very rarely will you talk to anyone whose intentions were negative—at least from their perspective. Typically, they either don't recognize how their behavior affects others, or they don't know how to act differently.

To help them gain awareness, ask questions like, "Did you notice how people reacted when you said that?" "Why do you think they responded that way?" If you can help them see the cues and understand them, then they can start to adjust their behavior.

Once they acknowledge the issues, help them come up with new ideas about how they could behave differently. Encourage them to experiment by replacing a negative behavior with a positive one, such as writing down a thought instead of interrupting with a negative response. Ideally, they'll start to see that they are more successful when they work in sync with the group instead of opposing odds.

### **An employee started out strong but is no longer growing or improving.**

Many employees who stop growing in their job do so because they no longer feel challenged. At a new job, passion and energy are really high, but competence is often low (which is to be expected). New employees are hanging on by their fingertips and don't quite know what they're doing. The newness forces them to learn and grow very quickly, creating a satisfying sense of accomplishment. However, sometimes this passion can fade as competence grows and the job or routine becomes more comfortable. This can lead people to coast on their expertise without really growing or improving.

To help an employee regain momentum, create a new problem to solve. If you put people in a position or task they haven't done before, you'll see that new job cycle start up again. When you can, align the challenges you offer with your employee's career goals, such as a leadership role, or technical expertise in a specific aspect of your team's work.

No matter what they're working on, you can help boost motivation by showing them the impact their work makes. If they see how their work benefits others and how improving their performance changes the outcome, they are more likely to work hard for you even after the novelty fades.

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## Take charge tips to tame "Talkaholics"

Use these strategies to hold your own in conversation with a compulsive talker who doesn't seem to know how to listen or take turns:

**Establish a time frame.** As you begin the conversation, explain that you do not have unlimited time for discussion: "*I have only five minutes before I need to.*"

**Interrupt when necessary.** Regain some control by breaking in firmly when you need to: "*Hold on a moment, I have something to say*" or "*Let me respond to what you just said.*"

**Set parameters.** Talkaholics tend to share all the details they know, so tell your talkaholic just how much you want to hear: "*I don't need all the details right now—just give me the headlines.*"

**Escape.** If nothing else works, you need to remove yourself from a frustrating situation. Simply say "*Excuse me; I need to go now.*" If you sense the topic is important, set an appointment to revisit it at a more convenient time.

Adapted from "Conversation and Compulsive Talkers," Loren Ekroth, *Better Conversations*, [www.conversation-matters.com](http://www.conversation-matters.com)

# Getting your team to speak up!

According to the website *Silence Fails*, the inability of leadership to see the reality of a situation is an all-too-common occurrence these days. The authors of the site conducted research that reveals “fact-free planning” by team leaders is a major factor in project failure.

While the pursuit of excellence is important for any team, so too is having a firm grasp on what is truly possible to achieve. It’s ironic—when leaders drive for results, but make it difficult for their people to point out unrealistic objectives, they actually get *further away from* achieving their objectives.

As a leader, how easy is it for your team to tell you “this won’t work.” Here are five ways you can create the space for people to open up:

**Lose the pep talk.** Motivational platitudes like “Let’s push harder and give it a 110 percent!” are useless. The only activity these phrases increase are people’s eye-rolling.

**Don’t mistake silence for agreement.** When you ask for your team’s commitment, look closely at their body language. Are they “open” to your request, making eye contact and sitting slightly forward, or are they “closed,” verbally hedging with phrases like “Maybe” or “I’ll do my best”?

**Show them it’s OK to say “No.”** Start with your projects — what are *you* willing to “take off your plate” and say “no” to? Modeling that you are willing to prioritize helps your team see that they can come forward with their concerns too.

**Learn to ask prioritizing questions.** Phrases like “What are we going to take off the list to make room for this new task?” and “Is there a different way we can approach this and still meet our objectives?” will go a long way to showing your team that you are not “out to lunch” when it comes to understanding their challenges.

**Ask for honesty. And then reward it.** The best way to get people to open up is to ask for, and then listen to their reasoning or concerns. If this is new behavior for you, you may need to ask several times before people will speak up. Be sure to sincerely thank the first person who ventures feedback, even if it’s misguided or poorly worded. You want to reward the act of speaking up. Later, you can work on coaching people to give constructive feedback.

For many people, “You can do it!” isn’t the best motivator, and it’s just not productive. Show your team that you live in the Land of Reality, not the Land of the Overly Optimistic, by encouraging a culture that makes it OK to speak up.

**“IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, GO ALONE.  
IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER.”**

-African Proverb



## “Are we there yet?” How to prepare your team for change

Change is a journey. If you don’t prepare your fellow travelers thoroughly, the experience can feel like a cross country car trip with a crew of children complaining from the backseat all the way. You can turn the voyage into an adventure by addressing these key issues upfront:

- **Why should we change?** Explain the situation in detail. Cite the changes that have already occurred and describe their impact on future projects and activities. Show the dangers of staying on your current course, and point out the benefits of changing to a new path in terms of future growth and stability.
- **How difficult will the change be?** Be honest but reassuring—and avoid making any promises you’re not sure you can keep. If you don’t have the answers, say so, but do your best to find out. Remember that most people will accept bad news if they understand the reasons behind it.
- **How should I get ready?** By focusing on the “how,” you will reduce anxiety about the change. Explain what your team will need to know—what job skills they should sharpen, for example—and how they can position themselves for success.
- **How will the organization help?** As you plan for the change, pull together the roadmaps your employees will need for the trip. When you announce the change, outline the resources that will be available so no one feels lost or confused.

-Adapted from “Surviving the Twilight Zone: The psychology of organizational change.” By Jon Johnston, on the Work Relationship Web site

## Respect employees’ time and increase productivity

In this age of “do more with less,” employees value every minute of the workday. As a manager, you need to respect their time and value it as much as they do. Here are some things to remember:

- **Don’t abuse your cell phone.** When you’re on the commute home, and you know a key employee is working late, it’s tempting to call to talk business. Don’t. Employees don’t arrive early or stay late for fun—they are trying to accomplish something, and giving up their personal time to do so. Let them work in peace.
- **Ask for permission to extend meeting times.** Set specific times for meetings, and insist that everyone—yourself included—is on time. When assigning a time, set a finishing time too, so employees can better schedule their days (“We’ll meet from 10 to 10:45.”). If the meeting is productive and you don’t want to quit at the designated time, ask if it’s okay to extend the meeting—and offer employees who need to leave the chance to do so.
- **Learn to make “24-hour promises—and stick to them.** When an employee comes to you with a question, and you don’t know the answer, don’t blow it off. They’ll waste time finding the answer somewhere else. Tell them, “I’ll be in my office 24 hours from now with an answer. Meet me here.” Then jot down the problem, and the appointed time in your day planner. Make sure you have an answer waiting.

# Pride and Courage

By Margie Warrell

*Used with Permission*

When I was twenty-two I returned from a year backpacking around the world after graduating from college. It was a tough job market and after months of washing dishes in corporate cafeterias while looking for a 'real job', I finally landed one—selling incontinence 'Kylie' bedsheets to nursing homes and hospices. While selling incontinence linen had never been an aspiration (understatement), and my title "Manager, Kylie Comfort Services" sounded dubious, I was so grateful to be on a salary.

At the time, I couldn't afford to be too proud. I had rent to pay, and wanted to save money for more overseas adventures. It was a valuable lesson in the value of humility and the importance of saving pride for those things we have made happen, not those things we are afraid might happen.

Yet over the intervening years I've encountered many people who've let a false sense of 'pride' - driven by a fear of losing face and maintaining a certain image in the eyes of others - keep them from doing things that would ultimately serve them. The result is that their 'false pride' has taken a huge toll on their happiness, often undermining their professional success and unconsciously sabotaging trust in their relationships in profound ways. I've met people...

- who turned down roles that they deemed 'beneath them' which would ultimately have opened doors to bigger and better opportunities
- who would rather struggle in a job than ask for help and support, afraid of being thought badly of for doing so.
- afraid to take a risk in their career because they can't bare the loss of face should things not work out.
- who won't admit making a mistake, much less apologizing for it (profoundly damaging trust in their relationships)

Earlier this year (in trying to walk my own talk) I put my pride on the line to host my first ever "Courageous Conversations" Dinner in Melbourne. I'd be lying if I told you that I wasn't a little nervous about getting enough people to register. And so it was hugely exciting (and relieving) to have a sold out evening that was fun and rewarding and a fabulous chance to meet a lot of new people.

Which is why I want to challenge you to think about where your pride - driven by your fear of losing face or looking foolish, or your desire to keep up appearances and secure the admiration of others - might be interfering with your happiness or getting in the way of your continued success.

There is nothing like perspective to put false pride in its rightful place. Steve Jobs summed this up so powerfully in a speech he gave as he battled cancer. "Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life.

Because almost everything—all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure—these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important."

As you look toward your future, remember that one day you too will arrive at the twilight of your life. Be intentional in how you live it today, knowing that only when you have the courage to put your reputation on the line, and save your pride for the things you make happen, rather than your fear of what might happen, can you ever know just how much you are capable of achieving.



An intrepid Australian, [Margie Warrell](#) draws on her background in business, psychology, and executive coaching to help people live and lead with greater courage. The bestselling author of [Stop Playing Safe](#) (Wiley 2013), and [Find Your Courage](#) (McGraw-Hill 2009), Margie is also a keynote speaker and the mother of four noisy children.

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