

10 Tips for Being a Great Leader

Great leaders bring out the best in others. They also improve the thinking of the people around them without telling anyone what to do.

Here are 10 concepts, from David Rock's book *Quiet leadership - six steps to transforming performance at work*, that when put into practice, will help you be a great leader and improve your own as well as your team's performance. The first 5 summarise step one and the remaining five relate to steps two to six to transforming performance:

1. Let them do all the thinking

One of the keys to transforming performance is allowing your people to find their own answers. Let them think through their own issues rather than telling them what you think the solution is and what you think they need to do.

2. Focus on solutions

Although problems can certainly be interesting to discuss, focusing on solutions is more useful. If you catch yourself focusing on a problem or the drama in a situation, or even getting bogged down in detail, re-focus your attention on identifying and planning the way ahead.

3. Remember to stretch

Quiet leaders and comfortable making people feel uncomfortable. They know that stretching people so as they feel positively challenged brings growth, and in growth there is aliveness, engagement and passion. All of these are necessary for achieving great performance.

4. Accentuate the positive

Continually provide positive feedback in many forms over time to validate, confirm, encourage, support and believe in people's potential. As people start to see themselves in a new light, reality starts to change as well.

5. Put process before content

Be highly disciplined in all of your conversations and diligent in ensuring every conversation is as productive as possible every step of the way. Get the process of any conversation right before getting into any of the content. Having good process includes establishing clear expectations so you know at every moment exactly what you're talking about, and why, and where you're trying to get to.

6. Listen for potential

If we're not measuring and monitoring how people are growing, we can easily fall into the trap of focusing on their problems. Listen for where people are heading rather than for what might not be working and see people as their potential. The first step in seeing positive change in others is to expect.

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7. Speak with intent

Be succinct, specific and generous. Being succinct requires you to decide on the essence of what you want to say and say it in as few words as possible. In doing so, you'll keep people's attention and interest. This also allows people to create their own mental models that correlate to the ideas you are trying to share. Being specific means paying close attention to what others say so we can be accurate and detailed in our responses. Being succinct and specific together means including everything that's relevant in a dialogue, and nothing irrelevant. Being generous is a subtle thing - it's about being committed to the other person understanding your message. It means putting yourself in their shoes when you're speaking and taking care to use words they will connect with. Being generous is also a way of showing you care about the other person and it helps build trust. This invites the other person to take the conversation to a deeper level and in so doing, opens up the possibility of learning and change.

8. Dance toward insight

This step involves asking people the type of questions that will help them think more clearly and identify their own 'aha' moments or insights. To get this dance right, you need to first ask permission before getting personal or taking a conversation to a deeper level, then make sure you're on the same page, then ask your question. As you facilitate this dance, you'll see people's faces changing as they move from the awareness of a dilemma, to reflecting, to having an illumination and then being ready to take action.

9. Create new thinking

Quiet leaders do this by starting conversations with identifying the current reality of a person's thinking, widely exploring alternatives for action with them and then tapping into their energy and motivations.

10. Follow up

To help people recognize and further embed any habits they're developing or to ensure their new thinking becomes a reality, it's very important to follow up with them. By doing this in a positive and supportive way, we give people the encouragement they need to turn their delicate new circuits they've created in their brains into full-blown hard wiring.

If you'd like some assistance in working through these steps and in successfully building a coaching culture in your business or organisation, please call me on (08) 8338 3134 or 0411 471 941 or email me at tania@blueskycoaching.com.au. I'd love to help you do that!

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