

POWER!

BY WES FRIESEN

Do you desire to be more effective in all of your roles in life, including your leadership roles? I do, and I assume you do, too. All of the foremost experts on leadership define the essence of leadership as being influence. The world's top selling author on leadership — John Maxwell — cuts to the chase by saying, "Leadership is influence; nothing more and nothing less." To increase our influence, we need to understand and apply the concept of power. Power is the capacity or potential to influence — to affect others' beliefs, attitudes, and courses of action. Of course, people can use power for selfish or evil purposes, but let's assume we want to use power to serve others and make the world a better place.

To better use power, it's helpful to know the bases of power upon which we can draw. It's important to understand and have a multi-dimensional mindset. To maximize our influence, we can intentionally use and develop multiple bases of power, and not rely on only one or two. Based on what a variety of experts have discovered (and validated by my own experiences and discussions with others), it seems there are primarily 10 potential bases of power.

Bases of Power

Experts on power sometimes group the bases of power into two categories: per-

sonal power and position power. Let's start by examining some specific bases of personal power, which is defined as the influence capacity a leader derives based upon her personal relationships and characteristics. Examples of personal power bases include:

#1: Referent Power. Referent power comes from being trusted, respected, and well-liked. We gain referent power when others trust what we do and respect us for how we handle situations. This is a desirable source of power that can be developed as we intentionally work on building positive relationships and proving ourselves trustworthy. I agree with Maya Angelou's insight, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

#2: Expert Power. Expert power comes from a person's expertise — her skill, accomplishment, and knowledge. Francis Bacon observed, "Knowledge is power," and it's true. Expertise and knowledge can include a spectrum ranging from understanding job specific tasks to soft skills like knowing how to deal with difficult people. Developing our expertise — and sharing with others — is a healthy source of power.

#3: Moral Power. Moral power is attributed to a person who has a strong moral compass, who consistently lives out inspiring values, and is quick to apologize and own up to occasional failings. Martin Luther King Jr. gives us perspective when he said, "I am not interested in power for power's sake, but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right and that is good." Moral power is certainly something we all seek to earn.

#4: Charismatic Power. Some people are blessed with magnetic personalities and the extraordinary ability to inspire others. For those with this giftedness, this can be a useful source of power when combined with other healthy sources of power (e.g. moral), and used for positive purposes.

#5: Connection Power. Connection power comes when a person has developed strong connections (relationships) with key influencers, experts, and other resources. We can build more connection power when we network and build relationships with a wide range of people; people that can help us and others we are trying to serve. One way to build connection is to selflessly support others and assist them when they are in need of help. We can also practice my 3 Rs of showing respect, recognizing people for who they are and the value they bring, and rewarding in tangible and intangible ways. Connection power is also a healthy source of power.

#6: Political Power. Political power arises from a person's ability to work with people and social systems to gain their allegiance and support. Political power is developed by learning how to get things done within an organization; understanding the "ropes" and how to effectively achieve objectives within the corporate culture. Political power can be abused and used for self-serving purposes, but when used with altruistic motives, it is a source of power that is valuable to us. Position power is the derived power a person has from holding a particular office or rank in a formal organization system. Bases of position power include the last four items on this list:

#7: Legitimate Power. Legitimate power comes from the position a person holds. This is related to a person's title and job responsibilities. By itself, this source of power may result in a certain level of

compliance, but not necessarily a strong sense of commitment and cooperation. If legitimate power is used for the benefits of others instead of yourself (i.e. following the servant leadership philosophy), it can be a key component of the multi-dimensional power we seek.

#8: Reward Power. Reward power comes from a person's ability to bestow rewards. Rewards may come in the form of pay and benefits, bonuses, gift cards, job assignments, preferred schedules, time off with pay, and other valued benefits. Rewards can also be of an intangible nature, as modeled by Sam Walton when he explained, "Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They are absolutely free and worth a fortune." Rewards that are used fairly and sincerely can be a useful source of power to recognize and reinforce desired behaviors and performance.

#9: Informational Power. Informational power is when an individual possesses

the ability to limit or grant access of others to relevant information. The positive and preferred use of informational power is to share information as broadly as we can and help people feel like "insiders" versus "outsiders." I like the principle of erring on the side of over-communicating versus under-communicating and feel this leads to increasing our power with others.

#10: Coercive Power. Coercive power rests in the ability of a person to force another to comply with an order through the threat of punishment. Coercive power can result in short-term compliance, but in the long-run produces dysfunctional behavior. This type of power is not recommended except perhaps in rare, emergency situations.

Here are a couple of closing thoughts about power. First, true power is something we earn and can't demand of others. Second, power can be used for good or evil purposes, and has the potential to corrupt us if we are not careful.

Plato observed, "The measure of a man is what he does with power." And Abraham Lincoln counseled, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." Let's go out and expand and use our power to serve others, and do what we can to make the world — and our workplaces — a better place! ■

Wes Friesen (MBA, EMCM, CMDSM, MCOM, MDC, OSPC, CCE, CBF, CBA ICP, CMA, CFM, CM, APP, PHR, CTP) is a proven leader and developer of high-performing teams and has extensive experience in both the corporate and non-profit worlds. He is also an award-winning university instructor and speaker, and is the President of Solomon Training and Development, which provides leadership, management, and team-building training.

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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: THE PATH TO A BETTER FUTURE!

BY WES FRIESEN

We all desire for the teams we influence and lead to be successful — both now and in the future.

How can we help ensure that our teams achieve the results that will lead to success and a better outlook? An important key is to embrace the philosophy of Continuous Improvement (CI), which states we need to continually strive to get better at what we do, such as make never-ending improvements to our work processes. The roots of the CI philosophy can be traced to the pioneer of the Quality Movement — Dr. W. Edwards Deming — and the Japanese, who refer to the philosophy as “Kaizen.” The contrast to traditional thinking can be illustrated as:

Old Thinking: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

New Thinking: “Just because it isn’t broke doesn’t mean it can’t be improved.”

Respected management expert Brian Tracy sums up the philosophy by encouraging, “Practice the philosophy of continuous improvement. Get a little better every single day.”

Benefits of Continuous Improvement Philosophy

Why bother with striving for CI? Studies have shown some of the benefits include:

- ▶ **Boosts productivity** — improves processes and eliminates waste, leading to increased efficiency.

- ▶ **Improves quality of our products and services** — leading to less re-work and more satisfied customers.
- ▶ **Creates a competitive advantage** — gives your team an edge over competitors.
- ▶ **Improves the culture** — as your team experiences improvements and the resulting benefits, satisfaction, engagement, and morale will all increase. Employees will feel empowered to make a positive difference!
- ▶ **Increases teamwork** — encourages all employees to contribute ideas and work together to implement value-added improvements.

Key Principles Supporting Continuous Improvement Philosophy

1. Make an intentional, long-term commitment. Management expert Peter Drucker stated, “Nothing good happens by accident.” To be successful at CI, we need to have a long-term view and commitment. CI should not be a mere management “flavor of the month,” but rather an enduring, never-ending quest to always strive to make things a little bit better. Deming, in his classic 14 points, emphasized the concept he called “constancy of purpose”— an unrelenting, unwavering focus on process improvements.

2. Focus on “proactive fire prevention” rather than “reactive fire fighting.” Many managers and their teams are constantly distracted by creating and putting

out a series of “fires” (i.e. being reactive fire fighters). Being caught in this reactive mode distracts from solving the root causes of the problems and causes people to work harder, rather than smarter. The CI approach is to intentionally work smart at proactively preventing fires (problems) in the first place. Related to this approach is the emphasis on preventive maintenance rather than corrective maintenance. To illustrate this approach, think about why we do regular oil changes in our cars (i.e. preventive maintenance). The alternative if we don’t is that somewhere down the road (pun intended) we will face a major corrective maintenance repair bill!

3. Ask for and be receptive to feedback. This is very important to the success of a CI philosophy. We need to encourage lots of communication and ideas to be shared, then be open and receptive to evaluating and acting on those that can help us improve.

4. Work as a team. Here is a key truth: “We are better together!” If our goal is to improve together as a team, making sure we are working as a team is important. It’s also wise to expand our concept of team to include our work team, as well as internal service provider support teams like IT and HR, and external key vendors and suppliers.

5. Choose small, manageable improvements. CI, by definition, is all about making ongoing small, incremental improvements. Consider the “one percent rule,” which says to strive for modest one percent improvements at a time — and realize that many one percent improvements over time add up to significant long-term progress.

6. Measure progress and celebrate improvements. Drucker taught, “What gets measured gets improved.” We need to track our key performance measures to ensure that targeted improvements are taking place. And when there are improvements, we need to celebrate the progress. Two key principles I teach are: “Success breeds success” and “Celebrated small wins, over time, lead to big wins.”

Some Useful Tools Supporting CI

One useful tool that has been used by many organizations for many years is the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. There are four basic steps:

Plan: Identify an improvement and plan for change.

Do: Complete the activities to implement the change, which may be on a small scale or trial basis initially.

Check: Once implemented, check the results to ensure they align with expectations.

Act: If the change was successful, implement on a wider basis and continually assess your results. If the change did not work, begin the cycle again.

Another useful set of tools involves benchmarking and best practices analysis. Benchmarking involves comparing our systems and processes with other teams that are high performing. Benchmarking can reveal where our operations are performing well and also identify areas where we have the most room for improvements. Analysis involves identifying the best practices used by the top performers of a given process. We then use a tool like PDCA to pursue our improvement initiatives to bring us in line with the best practices.

Sources of Potential CI Improvement Ideas

We need to be constantly looking for

potential ideas to make our operations better and practice the CI philosophy.

Here are some of the idea sources we should consider:

Front line employees: The people who do the work often have the best ideas on how to improve processes and make them more efficient and easier. Let's ask them on a regular basis for their ideas!

Benchmarking and peer comparisons: Developing good relationships with other teams and organizations that do similar work is extremely valuable. Plugging into trade associations like PCCs, MSMA, and others can support our efforts to benchmark and learn the best practices of others.

Conferences: Many of the best ideas that I have learned and implemented came from participating in conferences like the National Postal Forum. We can learn from the speakers, peers, and experts we meet at the conference, along with the trade floor vendors and suppliers.

Trade periodicals: We can learn good ideas from business trade journals like Mailing Systems Technology. Trade journals like this one feature articles and stories containing practical ideas that we can learn from, and also highlight leading edge vendors that may be helpful to our operations.

Consultants: Sometimes it is worth the investment to bring in a proven consultant to analyze our operations and suggest improvements. If you'd like a recommendation, please feel free to reach out to me.

A final closing quote to consider by Pat Riley, successful NBA coach and General Manager: "Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better." My best to you and your team as you improve your excellence by practicing the CI philosophy! ■

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WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER!

BY WES FRIESEN

History shows — and we know — that we are better together! By working well together, we can truly accomplish more than we can as individuals. Mother Teresa wisely said, “I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.” Helen Keller cut to the chase by stating, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” By working together, we can pool our collective strengths, wisdom, intelligence, skills, talents, and experiences. By working well together, we can cover for a teammate that is temporarily down by life circumstances... and can support each other when dealing with a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. By working together, we can experience true synergy, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts!

Ways to Work Better Together

The end goal of being better together is to create team collaboration — cultivating a teamwork-focused environment. Experts say — and research shows — that when we create an atmosphere where our team members feel safe, valued, and able to share their ideas and solutions, they become more creative, effective, innovative, and productive. Research from Salesforce found that:

- ▶ 99.1% of employees prefer an open, honest, and collaborative working environment
- ▶ 89% of employees felt a lack of collaboration is responsible for workplace failures
- ▶ < 50% of employees feel that their employers provide a collaborative environment

So, how do you go about cultivating team collaboration? Here are five key ways:

1. Collaborative Leaders. Leaders set the tone and model what is most important to the team. Collaborative leaders are inclusive in their behaviors and set an example worth emulating. An “inclusive leader” is someone who:

- ▶ Makes team members feel valued
- ▶ Ensures equal and respectful treatment of all team members
- ▶ Gives team members a sense of belonging
- ▶ Is both confident about, and inspired by, the team's work
- ▶ Respects all people regardless of background

Research conducted by the *Harvard Business Review* found that inclusive leaders who fit this description bring about measurable change to a team's performance and mindset. The results show that teams with inclusive leaders are:

- ▶ 29% more likely to report behaving collaboratively
- ▶ 17% more likely to report they are high performing
- ▶ 20% more likely to say they make high-quality decisions
- ▶ 10% more consistent at coming to work

2. Shared Mindset and Common Purpose. Leaders can model and encourage a mindset that we need each other, and avoid the “us versus them” thinking that can creep in. Participatively establishing an inspiring common purpose can stimulate the sense of working together we covet. Clarifying our mission (why

the team exists), vision (picture of our desired future), and values (what do we believe is important) provides the foundation for a common purpose. Adding specific SMART goals and the strategies to achieve them rounds out the common purpose we need.

3. Make Giving a Priority. I recently read Adam Grant's book *Give and Take*, which provides scientific evidence to back up the importance of giving. Grant shows that the workplace is made up of three types of people:

- 1. Takers:** those looking to receive from others
- 2. Matchers:** those looking to reciprocate as much as they receive (and no more)
- 3. Givers:** those who share without expectation

According to his research, teams that are made up of givers tend to be more productive, creative, and collaborative. Why? Givers do not see success as a zero-sum game. Instead, they look at their teams as one unit who can benefit from the free-flow of information, advice, and support. “Givers,” Grant writes, “get to the top without cutting others down... expanding the pie that benefits themselves and the people around them ... in groups of givers, it may be true that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”

His findings are backed up by research from the University of Western Australia. In a study of teams working toward a common goal, they found that interdependence and the willingness to share were vital to a team's success. In teams where individuals were self-involved and not forthcoming with helpful information, teamwork broke down to an unproductive level, and they eventually became unsuccessful in reaching their objectives. Although the individual maybe stood out, the team fell apart and did not reach their goals. In contrast, the teams that focused on giving, teamwork, and collaboration were dramatically more productive and able to reach their goals.

4. Create Psychological Safety. Psychological safety is when team members feel they can safely and without negative consequences share their thoughts, ideas, advice, opinions, and mistakes. Executive and author Timothy Clark

describes it as "a condition in which you feel (1) included, (2) safe to learn, (3) safe to contribute, and (4) safe to challenge the status quo — all without fear of being embarrassed, marginalized, or punished in some way." It can also be defined as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking. In psychologically safe teams, team members feel accepted and respected.

Google's Project Aristotle study revealed the keys to their most productive and inventive teams. Surprisingly, the top teams were not the A-teams composed of their top scientists, but B-teams which contained people not considered the smartest or most knowledgeable. The top performing teams had the best sense of connection between team members (fostered by interest in teammates' ideas, empathy, and emotional intelligence) and also a feeling of psychological and emotional safety. Team members feeling safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other was "far and away the most important dynamic that set successful teams apart."

5. Supportive Systems and Processes.

Having the right systems and processes in place is crucial to maximizing team performance and working together well. This includes maintaining a reward system that reinforces good performance and living the team's values; an information system that provides access to the data needed for the work; an educational system that offers training and development; and last — but not least — ability to secure the resources required to do the job, such as funding and technological assistance. While no team ever gets everything it wants, we can head off a lot of problems by taking the time to get the essential pieces in place that our teams need to be successful.

6. Follow Lencioni's Five Key Behaviors.

Patrick Lencioni, in his classic and bestselling book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, emphasizes five specific behaviors to maximize teamwork and team performance. These five behaviors build upon each other and include: vulnerability-based trust, healthy conflict, active commitment, peer-to-peer accountability, and a focus on results.

Former LinkedIn CEO Reid Hoffman asserted, "No matter how brilliant your mind or strategy, if you're playing a solo game, you'll always lose out to a team." Baseball legend Babe Ruth observed, "The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime." Bottom line: We are better together! ■

Wes Friesen (MBA, EMCM, CMDSM, MCOM, MDC, OSPO, CCE, CBF, CBA, ICP, CMA, CFM, CM, APF, PRR, CTR) is a proven leader and developer of high-performing teams and has extensive experience in both the corporate and non-profit worlds. He is also an award-winning university instructor and speaker, and is the President of Solomon Training and Development, which provides leadership, management, and team-building training.

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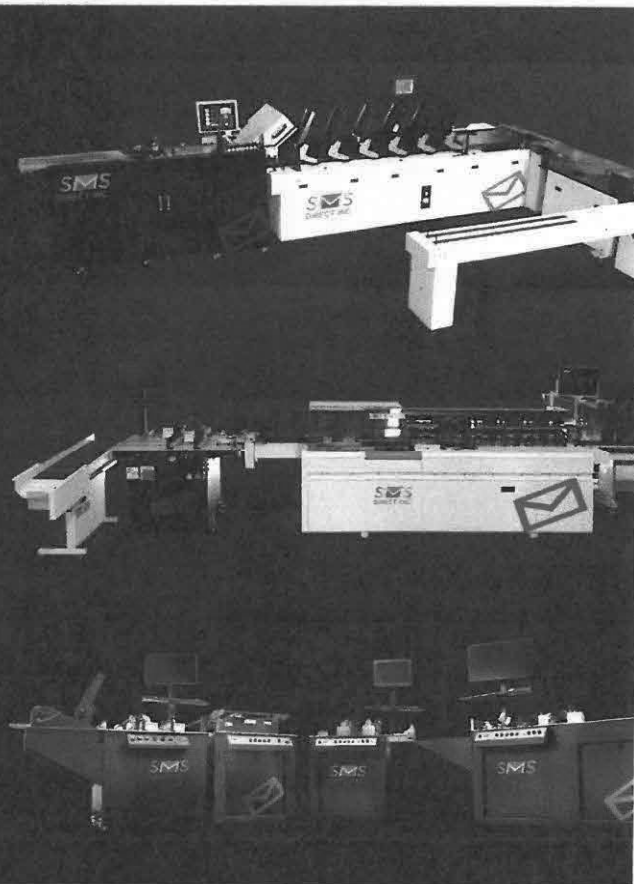
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THINKING UPSTREAM: PREVENTING PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY OCCUR!

BY WES FRIESEN

Benjamin Franklin famously wrote, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." He wrote those words in the specific context of fire safety, contributing to the establishment of the Union Fire Company and impressing the importance of fire safety upon the general public. The wisdom of those words ring true today and can be very valuable to us, our teams, and the people serve. Dan Heath builds upon Franklin's concept in his new book, *Upstream*, in which he advocates for "upstream" thinking, which is defined as efforts to prevent problems before they occur. This is in contrast to "downstream" thinking, which is reacting to problems after they occur.

Preventing problems before they occur can save time, energy, frustration, money — and, in some cases, human injuries or even lives (e.g., upfront medical tests for life threatening illnesses). But it's not all smooth sailing; Heath points out some challenges to adopting upstream thinking, such as:

Problem Blindness — This includes not seeing the problems, or seeing the negative outcomes but believing they are regrettable but natural and not solvable (e.g., we will always have "x" level of unhappy customers or have "y" error rates).

Lack of Ownership — This is the feeling that the problem is not one specific person's responsibility to fix (i.e., refusing to own the problem). Sometimes problems lack owners because of fragmented responsibilities — where multiple departments touch a problem but there is not one clear owner — or just due to a feeling that it's not our place to intervene.

Tunneling — Sometimes if we are juggling multiple problems, we can give up trying to solve them all ("I can't deal with that right now"). Tunneling can result in tunnel vision, which leads to short-term, reactive thinking.

Key Principles to Thinking Upstream

1. Take ownership of potential problems. Embrace the upstream thinking mindset, which includes looking for potential problems, taking ownership of them, and not waiting for someone else to resolve. Strive to be a "problem finder" and realize small problems often precede big problems — so it is better to discover and resolve problems early on when they are small before they grow into big issues that can do great harm.

2. Plan ahead. President John F. Kennedy wisely said, "The time to repair

the roof is when the sun is shining." The best time to think upstream is when the water (life) is calm and you can carefully plan to keep it that way. It's hard to think upstream when you are in the middle of a storm and just trying to stay afloat! The advice of Pimco CEO Mohamed El-Erian applies: "It's better to be prepared for events that don't happen than unprepared for events that do."

3. Learn from the past. We are wise when we learn from our past experiences, including mistakes and the resulting problems. Michael Alter (President of SurePay) remarked, "Mistakes are the tuition you pay for success." I concur with this advice from Warren Buffett: "It's good to learn from your mistakes. It's better to learn from other people's mistakes." A special learning opportunity comes from going through a major crisis, like the COVID pandemic we are working through. Winston Churchill said, "Never let a good crisis go to waste." We can seize the opportunity to learn and be prepared for any future crisis that comes our way.

4. Strongly consider strategic sourcing. Strategic sourcing involves not using a single vendor (source) for our key materials, supplies, and services (although exceptions may apply). The concern of being single sourced is, what happens to our ability to produce our goods and services if that one vendor has financial, supply chain, or operational problems? Strategic sourcing also considers where the vendor is located — do we really want to rely on having a crucial item we need coming only from a supplier in an overseas location like China?

5. Encourage collaboration and involve people. All of us are smarter than any one of us. We need people on our teams, supporting teams like IT, and our key vendors and suppliers to anticipate potential problems before they occur, and then to design and implement effective preventive solutions. We can encourage all people, especially our front-line employees, to share their concerns and potential future problems they foresee.

One tool we can use is to have planned brainstorm sessions, where we ask people to share potential problems they think might be in our future. We can also think about potential scenarios (e.g., pandemics

or natural disasters like earthquakes and fires) and discuss how we can be prepared to prevent or at least minimize the impact.

6. Change systems as needed. Remember this key principle: "Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets." We need to continually evaluate the results of our systems based on their actual outcomes, including their impact on our key stakeholders. Getting stakeholder input like customer feedback is valuable. And part of our system evaluation should include our ability to prevent problems or at least mitigate their impact.

7. Have proven back-up systems in place. We should have back-up systems and processes in place for our key equipment and operations. One strategy is to have prudent internal redundancy. For example, in my print and mail operations, we had two printers and two inserters, and we had the ability to produce key deliverables with only a single printer or single inserter if one unit was down. Another back-up option we used was to have a reciprocal agreement with a comparable operation — we could use the partner's equipment and technology to produce our outputs and vice-versa. A third strategy we used was relying on a vendor for back-up purposes. One important tip for all three of these options is to test out on a regular basis — you don't want to be in an emergency mode and find out your back-up plan doesn't work! One additional tip: make sure that crucial spare parts are stored on-site or available to be delivered on short notice.

8. Test thoroughly. In addition to testing our back-up systems and processes, we should thoroughly test all proposed solutions before they go live. We have all seen new systems go live with poor results due to inadequate testing — we don't want to join that club!

9. Pursue Poka-Yokes. Poka-yoke is a Japanese term that means "mistake-proofing" or "error-proofing" a process. We see "error-proofing" examples in our everyday lives — examples include car safety features, elevators and garage doors equipped with sensors that prevent doors from closing if there is something or someone in the way, and spell check functions in software programs and phones. We can intentionally implement poka-yokes by tools such as checklists that provide guidance to avoid errors; ensuring software applications have built in checks (e.g., require entries on key data fields and in correct format); and using technology and "smart" equipment (e.g., camera systems on inserters).

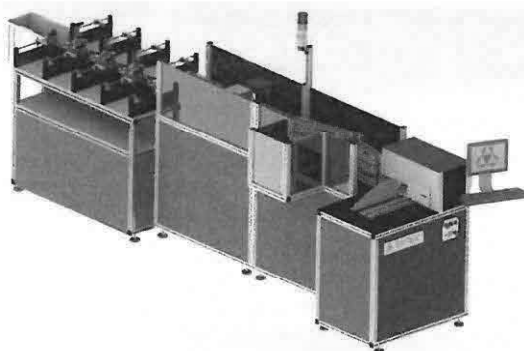
10. Measure regularly and track progress. We should monitor leading indicators and measures that can warn us of potential bigger problems ahead, such as an increase in customer complaints or a spike in error rates. We also need to be responsive to external sign posts that may affect our operations. Example: if you are a print and/or mail vendor for your state, and your state is exploring adding vote-by-mail, be ready! ■

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OUR GREATEST INVESTMENT: OUR PEOPLE!

BY WES FRIESEN

Harvey Firestone once said, "The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership." If you agree that people are truly the most valuable resource of any organization, then Harvey's quote rings true. We need to invest in our people by helping them learn, grow, and develop. There are a number of good business reasons that support investing in the growth and development of people:

- ▶ Increases employee productivity
- ▶ Reduces turnover
- ▶ Helps retain and attract talented people
- ▶ Helps our teams and organization be more successful by being better able to serve our stakeholders

Let's explore some key principles on investing in our people well, by developing and helping them to learn and grow.

Key Principles to Develop People

1. Make developing people a priority.

To make developing people a true priority, we need to be intentional, schedule time, and make it happen. We need to develop and execute specific plans and strategies on how to develop people — then follow through, including making our meeting times with employees a priority so they feel we truly care about them.

2. Be a good role model. We can be transparent about our own need to learn and develop, and share how we are

doing it. We can embrace vulnerability; people respect humble leaders that are trying to keep learning and developing themselves. Robin Sharma counsels us, "Investing in yourself is the best investment you will ever make. It will not only improve your life, it will improve the lives of all those around you."

3. Reinforce the value of learning and growth.

Discuss with employees what they would like to accomplish, and work with them to identify learning goals and strategies that will help them fulfill their ambitions. A positive side effect from our employees' development is they will be adding more value to the organization at the same time they are improving themselves (a real win-win!).

4. Participatively create individual development plans.

Collaborating with an employee on creating an individualized development plan is crucial. The plan can cover three to five specific learning and development goals over the next 12 months, and for each goal, one or more specific actions can be identified to help achieve that goal. A simple example: a learning goal may be to "Become more proficient at Excel," and the action to meet the goal could be to complete an Excel class.

5. Focus on maximizing strengths.

Credible research over the past 20 years has demonstrated that individuals and

their teams are better off when the majority of development is focused on maximizing strengths (as opposed to trying to fix weaknesses). One of my favorite authors on this topic is Marcus Buckingham, who has written classic books like *Now Discover Your Strengths* and *Standout*. His books contain free strength assessments. One of those can be found on marcusbuckingham.com/gift-of-standout. Another excellent book is Tom Rath's *StrengthFinders 2.0*.

6. Consider the 70:20:10 model. A trio of industrial psychologists developed this model, which suggests that 70% of learning and development occurs in context of real-life and on-the-job experiences, tasks, and problem solving. Twenty percent comes from formal or informal feedback, mentoring, or coaching; and 10% comes from formal training. All three categories are important and can be incorporated into the individual development plans.

7. Delegate well. Given that up to 70% of learning and development comes from real-life and on-the-job experiences, delegation is a great tool to provide those opportunities. Tips to delegate well include delegating tasks that are within the skill set of the employee, even if a bit of a stretch (some stretch is a great way to learn!); ensure clear expectations; and offer help but avoid micromanaging. After any learning experience, it's very helpful to ask questions to help people gain perspective and learn from both their successes and failures. Three good questions are:

"How was your experience?"

"What did you learn?"

"What would you do differently next time?"

8. Provide feedback and acknowledgment.

We know from our experiences what research tells us — people crave appreciation and recognition, so let's give that out. Positive feedback reinforces learning and incites people to keep on learning and developing. People also need helpful constructive feedback when mistakes happen, so they can turn mistakes into learning opportunities and move forward.

9. Use team meetings as learning opportunities.

We can use time at some of our existing team meetings for learning,

such as inviting guests to share useful information. We can also share key takeaways from recent articles, books, blogs, webinars, seminars, conferences, and classes we have learned from. And we can have team members share their recent learnings too. We all know team meetings can be B-O-R-I-N-G, so let's spice them up with some practical learning!

10. Understand and use relevant tools:

There are a wide array of tools we can use to help our employees learn and grow, including university and other classes, seminars, webinars, online learning, and special assignments, to name a few. Following are a few specific methods we can consider:

Coaching: Coaching involves a more experienced or skilled individual providing an employee with advice and guidance intended to help the employee gain new skills, improve performance, and enhance the quality of their career.

Mentoring: Mentoring typically matches less experienced employees with more

experienced employees through formal or informal programs. The goal is to help the less experienced employee gain new skills and therefore improve performance.

Cross Training/Job Rotation: These programs are intended for participants to broaden their skills by having the opportunity to perform job tasks other than those currently assigned.

Job Enlargement and Job Enrichment:

Job enlargement involves expanding the employee's job by adding more tasks and duties, typically at the same level of complexity (example: have the employee who prepares report ABC also prepare report XYZ). Job enrichment builds more depth to an employee's job through more control and responsibility (example: have employee who prepares a report also present it to management).

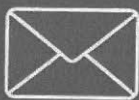
Jack Welch counseled, "Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others." One final recommendation: if you are considering books to read on this topic,

another one I suggest is John Maxwell's most recent entitled, *The Leader's Greatest Return*. My best to you as you make your greatest investment into the people — they (and you!) will be glad you did. ■

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His book, *Your Team Can Soar!* has 42 valuable lessons that will inspire you, and give you practical pointers to help you — and your team — soar to new heights of performance. *Your Team Can Soar!* can be ordered from Xulonpress.com/bookstore or wesfriesen.com (under Book) or an online retailer like Amazon or Barnes & Noble. Wes can be contacted at wesmfriesen@gmail.com or at 971.806.0812.

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IS YOUR TEAM SAFE?

BY WES FRIESEN

We all know the importance of keeping our teams physically safe, but it is also important for our success to keep our teams psychologically safe. What is psychological safety? Amy Edmondson from Harvard University is considered the world's leading expert on psychological safety. She describes psychological safety as a "climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves. People feel comfortable sharing concerns and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution. They are confident that they can speak up safely... they know they can ask questions when they are unsure about something. They tend to trust and respect their colleagues."

Research has shown many benefits of psychologically safe work environments, including:

- ▶ Mistakes are reported quickly so that prompt corrective action can be taken
- ▶ Seamless coordination across groups or departments is enabled
- ▶ Potentially game changing ideas are shared
- ▶ Drives higher engagement, collaboration, conflict resolution, and participation
- ▶ Makes it easier to include the voice of sometimes quiet members such as women, introverts, and minorities

Psychological Safety Survey

So, how psychologically safe is your team right now? One tool to evaluate is to use the survey below, which consists of seven questions that Edmondson suggests asking our team members. Ask your team for candid responses based on their recent experiences. We can request simple "Yes" or "No" responses, which

would be acceptable. To get a finer calibration of responses, I recommend using a five-point scale (e.g. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

1. If you make a mistake on this team, is it often held against you?
2. Are members of this team able to bring up problems and tough issues?
3. Do people on this team sometimes reject others for thinking differently?
4. Is it safe to take a risk on this team?
5. Is it difficult to ask other members of this team for help?
6. Would anyone on this team deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts?
7. When working with this team, are my unique skills and talents valued and utilized?

Follow-up is important. We can collectively highlight and capitalize on the perceived strengths of the team. And we can single out the weakest areas, and participatively work with the team to make improvements. Follow-up builds trust, earns respect, and will help our team take future surveys seriously because they know they will be acted on.

Keys to Build Psychological Safety

What can we do to build a higher level of psychological safety? Following are some ideas to consider:

1. **Measure Psychological Safety.** We can explain and then implement the preceding survey in order to get an assessment of the starting place with our team(s).
2. **Hold a team retrospective.** Once we have the survey results analyzed, we can discuss with our team. We can

also discuss some of the following key components below and show our personal commitment to having a safe workplace. It is important for us as leaders to set the tone and be a positive example of openness, transparency, and collaboration.

3. **Be human.** We are all part of the human family, and share universal needs such as appreciation, respect, grace, social status, and happiness. Recognizing these deeper needs naturally elicits trust and promotes positive language and behaviors. Paul Santagata, an executive at Google, has developed a useful tool called "Just Like Me." The idea is to reflect that other people we interact with are just like me in a number of ways, such as:

- ▶ This person has beliefs, perspectives, and opinions, just like me.
- ▶ This person has hopes, anxieties, and vulnerabilities, just like me.
- ▶ This person has friends, family, and perhaps children who love them, just like me.
- ▶ This person wants to feel respected, appreciated, and competent, just like me.
- ▶ This person wishes for peace, joy, and happiness, just like me.

4. **Establish adult rules and norms.**

Most companies say they trust their employees, but then their rules often show the opposite. Psychological safety is encouraging people to behave like adults; to address things openly, with respect and candor. Corporate and team rules should promote that same behavior. Trust is not built with words, but with actions. Some companies are now offering an unlimited vacation policy, while others have streamlined the approval process for expense reports. We may have limited opportunity to change corporate rules, but we can at least review and modify our team rules to show we trust our employees. Key point: when policies trust rather than control employees, people feel safe to bring their best selves to work.

5. **Give employees a voice and encourage participation.** A key component of psychological safety is to give all employees a voice, which includes encouraging people to challenge established practices that may not make sense. We want people to feel

safe to speak candidly and honestly, which will prevent the problems that come from group think. One practice to consider is conversational turn-taking, where each team member has a turn to speak up. Managers and loud people should go last, in order to not unduly influence or intimidate the rest.

6. Earn and extend trust. Edmondson connects trust to psychological safety: "It describes a team climate characterized by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves." We can earn trust by owning up to our mistakes, apologizing when appropriate, and being transparent and open about challenges we are facing.

7. Replace blame with curiosity. Mistakes and problems happen. Instead of blaming people, a better approach is to ask questions and work together to identify what happened and learn from the experience.

8. Promote healthy conflict. Healthy conflict exists when people feel

safe to share ideas and their perspectives, and ideas are debated in a non-judgmental manner. We want to encourage people to candidly yet respectfully express their thoughts, with the end goal of ending up with thoroughly vetted decisions that maximize benefits to the team and our stakeholders.

9. Reinforce desired behaviors. We should encourage desired behaviors and reward them when we see them being practiced. We also need to address behaviors that sabotage psychological safety. This is where putting on our coaching hat is valuable — helping people succeed by reinforcing positive behaviors and working with them to eliminate the negative.

10. Hold periodic check-ins. Building a psychologically safe workplace is not a one-time event. We need to stay diligent and be committed to the long-term. One tool to keep us and our team accountable is to periodically have intentional check-ins with

our teams and openly discuss how we are doing.

Here is a closing story supporting the importance of psychological safety. Google conducted an exhaustive five-year study called Project Aristotle, which was launched to explain the differences in performance among its 180 teams. Google was surprised that the top performing teams were not comprised of the members that were the smartest or holding the most impressive credentials — the primary key to the top performing teams was their level of psychological safety! ■

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