

# Developing a Leadership Mindset

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Discussion Guide

2022 | Tool of the Month



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## Introduction & Instruction for Groups

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### Introduction

We encourage you to invite your colleague(s), peer(s), team, leader manager and/or friend(s) to join you over the next 12 months to use the Tool of the Month and corresponding Discussion Guide as a vehicle to engage in the learning and creative dialogue around Developing a Leadership Mindset on a monthly basis with others.

### Roles (if participating in a Group)

Monthly Facilitator (consider alternating this role throughout the Group!)

### Group Instructions

- **Read:** Participants read and review the Tool of the Month on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the Month (on their own)
- **Reflect:** Individually and in advance of your time together, review the questions and write your reflections and responses to each one. *(The Guide will be updated and shared monthly with questions specific to the tenet.)*
- **Discuss:** Meet to share your reflections. After you share, write your conclusion(s) and or decisions as a result of your shared discussion.
- **Action:** Take a next step together, if appropriate, and outline what action you will take as a result of the reflection and discussion, whether individually or as a group. Put your agreed upon action into practice and track the outcomes and impact.
- **Result:** Lastly, record and share the results at agreed upon intervals and or at your next Tool of the Month meeting.

### Scheduling Tip

Consider identifying a day of the week and time suitable for the Group Members to put on the calendar for the next 12 months such as “the fourth Tuesday of the month at 4:00 P.M.”

### Quarterly Reading Recommendations

- Quarter #1: [On Becoming a Leader](#) by Warren G. Bennis
- Quarter 2: [Servant Leadership in Action](#) edited by Ken Blanchard & Renee Broadwell
- Quarter 3: [The 5 Dysfunctions of Team](#) by Patrick Lencioni
- Quarter 4: [The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive](#) by Patrick Lencioni

## January Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Developing a Leadership Mindset***

**“The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born—that there is a genetic factor to leadership. That’s nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born.”**

— Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*

We are extremely excited to share the theme of the 2022 Tool of the Month with you, *Developing a Leadership Mindset*. We thank you for joining us on the leadership journey!

For nearly twenty-five years, I have had the privilege of coaching and interacting with hundreds of Leader Managers, in various forms, as they seek to effectively navigate the ever changing and evolving leadership landscape. I look forward to continuing this work alongside you and your Teams in 2022!

This year we invite you to join us on the journey of *Developing a Leadership Mindset*. Through the twelve tenets we will explore together this year, we hope to bring value to your daily life as a leader. After all, we agree with leadership expert Warren Bennis, who teaches, “leaders are made rather than born.”

Our leadership ability is rooted in the behaviors we chose each day and the experiences we’ve engaged in. What usually “gets” an individual to a particular level of leadership responsibility in an organization tends to be a result of their subject matter expertise, rather than their proven leadership effectiveness. For each subject matter expert who has assumed or has been assigned leadership responsibility, adding leadership ability to subject matter expertise is critical to becoming an effective leader. Leadership is a skill of its own and expands the effectiveness of a subject matter expert.

Through years of dialogue and coaching leaders, we have found the most effective leaders grow by being introspective and intentional, by working to expand their ability and capacity to lead. Leaders do not have the luxury of self-identifying, “I am an effective leader!” We cannot proclaim ourselves an effective leader under any circumstance. Instead, only those we lead can bestow the title of leader on us. The mantle of leadership is developed as Warren Bennis wrote, “in the crucible moments we experience.” [Those crucibles](#) develop us, define us, and at times, wreck us.

Developing a leadership mindset requires each of us explore and examine our self-limiting beliefs and behaviors for the purpose of being and becoming a more effective leader. What type of leadership behaviors are you in the habit of choosing? Stephen Covey, in *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, states, “our character is a composite of our habits.”

The pursuit of effectiveness, rather than perfection, is a healthy goal of a leader. I don't believe we can achieve perfection this side of heaven, however I'm thoroughly convinced I can be and become more *effective* each day. The greatest battle of leadership effectiveness is fought in one's own mind.

We encourage and challenge you throughout 2022, to examine your leadership paradigms and to explore developing a leadership mindset with us as we learn, grow, serve, and lead ourselves and others each day.

As this year unfolds, we will be exploring a different leadership concept each month, providing a monthly discussion guide, and recommending one book each quarter we hope you and your colleagues will read together.

In the first of twelve tenets, we begin by sharing the 4 Cs of leadership which are foundational to our Leadership Coaching and Organizational Development Model, "The Code, Unlocking Your Organizational D-N-A."

We have identified 4 Cs to developing a leadership mindset. We can tell our brains what to think and as such, being and becoming an effective leader means creating a framework for filtering our thoughts and experiences as we lead others. We define the leadership mindset in terms of a filter for thoughts, experiences, and situations in handling yourself and others as:

- Caring
- Clarity
- Communication
- Consistency

**First C:** Caring – Leaders develop the ability to compel themselves to care about and for others. Leaders focus on caring about the quality of life and the quality of work of each and every individual in their scope of responsibility and do not have the luxury of deciding whether they like or "love" their colleagues. A deep passion for ensuring each person is provided with an environment where they can be and become the most effective version of themselves is the highest calling of a leader.

Regardless of an individual's communication style, personal beliefs, ethnicity or level of self-limiting behavior, leaders recognize and affirm the intrinsic value, dignity, and worth of others. They can prove a deep sense of caring in the workplace by supplying the tools, materials, equipment, compensation, affirmation, recognition, information, training, education, and validation of every individual's needs and desires.

Creating environments where each individual feels heard, seen, and respected is the foundation for creating high performing teams. A balance of caring about the quality of the lives of others and the quality of the individual and collective work performed results in extraordinary efforts, environments, and outcomes.

**Second C:** Clarity – Patrick Lencioni in his book *The Advantage*, states, "if you want organizational health, over-communicate clarity." An irony of leadership is you and I do not get to decide how much clarity others want and or need. Leaders tend to supply the amount of clarity to others by measure of

what they themselves need or by how much clarity they *think* others need. We have found one of the biggest gaps in effectiveness in organizations is simply a lack of clarity.

**Third C:** Communication – Communicate, communicate, communicate at all times and by all means, manners, and methods possible. Leaders ensure that appropriate organizational guiding principles (culture) and operational results, expectations, and plans are communicated to every individual, every team, and organization wide. Helpful, appropriate, effective, and efficient channels should be established to give and receive information, set and manage expectations, cheer progress, monitor results, and validate and recognize contributions.

**Fourth C:** Consistency – McDonald’s, the largest restaurant on Earth, serves food to hundreds of millions each year and has surpassed billions served by consistently delivering their product. Michael LeBoeuf writes, in *How to Win Customers and Keep Them for Life*, “consistent performance is what people want most.” There is no question in my mind that consistency is foundational to effective leadership.

What we allow, for ourselves and others, in terms of the behaviors we chose and the environments we create, we endorse. What does the culture you have created as a result of your leadership behavioral choices look and feel like? Do you lead and manage in an environment that is more energizing than frustrating to you and others? Are you spending valuable resources pursuing more opportunities and possibilities or are you refereeing squabbles and solving low level problems?

In referencing the path to effectiveness, James Cleary, in his must-read book *Atomic Habits*, states, “every habit produces multiple outcomes across time.” What evidence do you see and experience as a result of your leadership and management habits? What characteristics and skills are you in the habit of cultivating and employing that result in a positive, productive, meaningful impact and influence on others?

Now, more than ever, I am convinced that leadership is a choice. We decide and determine daily what habits we engage in thereby determining our level of effectiveness. I agree with Warren Bennis that leaders are *made* rather than born. If we are to be and become truly effective leaders, it is certainly a daily process of behaving and holding to truths consistently and steadfastly, while discovering and refining those very beliefs and behaviors.

Leadership is about living for and focusing on others; meeting the needs of others and creating environments to set individuals and teams up for success, meeting them where they are, by developing the characteristics and habits to be and become the most effective version of themselves possible this side of heaven. We are excited that you will be joining us on the journey in 2022 as we develop a leadership mindset together!

-LS

## January Discussion Questions

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**Question #1. How would you assess your individual and collective effectiveness in deploying the 4 C's (Caring-Clarity-Communication-Consistency) in your role as a leader?**

Reflection:

Conclusion/Decision:

Action:

Result:

**Question #2. What behaviors might we be allowing, therefore endorsing, on our Team, that are unhealthy, not helpful, or inappropriate, that may be limiting to ourselves and or our organization's achieving effectiveness?**

Reflection:

Conclusion/Decision:

Action:

Result:

**Question #3. Using Warren Bennis' Four Essential Leadership Competencies, what gaps in effectiveness might I/we be able to identify?**

Reflection:

Conclusion/Decision:

Action:

Result:

## January Discussion Guide Addendum

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*On Becoming a Leader; Warren Bennis*

*The Four Essential Leadership Competencies*

**“Timeless leadership is always about character, and it is always about authenticity.”**

Warren Bennis

First: They are able to engage others by creating shared meaning. They have a vision. They are exquisitely attuned to their followers and feel their pain, their wants, their need. Leaders, in every field, are richly endowed with empathy.

Second: All authentic leaders have a distinctive voice. I.e., purpose, self-confidence, and a sense of self, known as emotional intelligence.

Third: All true leaders have integrity. A strong moral compass. A powerful belief in something outside oneself.

Fourth: Adaptive capacity. Adaptive capacity is the ability to act and then to evaluate the results of their actions. The ability to identify and seize opportunities. Adaptive capacity allows leaders to respond quickly and intelligently to relentless change.



## February Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Trust & Caring are the Foundation of all Relationships!***

**“Leadership is first being, then doing. Everything the leader does reflects what he or she is.”**

Warren Bennis, page 134, *On Becoming a Leader*

A leader’s first and most sacred responsibility is to build trust by demonstrating caring. Who we are being, while we are doing (to others), is the foundation of our degree of effectiveness. We believe leaders are the vital mechanism in organizations that help guide and establish the culture, which creates decision-making and behavioral boundaries throughout the organization. The second most sacred responsibility of a leader is to set people up for success and create environments where each person can be and become the most effective version of themselves. This can only be done when trust and caring are established.

We believe trust and caring are the cornerstone and foundation of all relationships.

*Trust* can be defined as the firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something. We define trust bestowed or conferred on another, as an individual’s willingness to rely on the promises, behaviors, and integrity of another to act or not to act.

*Caring* can be defined as connecting to others in a manner that is meaningful to them. Putting the needs of others ahead of your own whenever “H-H-A”, healthy, helpful, and appropriate. Caring is not about whom we like or love.

Frequently, leaders characterize the culture of their organization in familial terms. We hear phrases such as “welcome to our organization, we’re going to treat you like family!” Organizations are their own unique organism with a variety of dynamics, constructs, and organizational norms and behaviors. They consist of unique individuals that form a Team, not a ‘family.’ Family comes in all shapes and sizes, functional and dysfunctional, and may be filled with nurture or abuse, love or abandonment. Families may have rigid and/or unconditional behavioral expectations. As such, it is best to not apply the family paradigm and construct to our workplace environments and teams!

Leaders are called to deeply care about the quality of work and quality of life of each individual on their Team. Trust is built when others feel they are heard *and* their needs are met, as evidenced by caring. If we do not care about the quality of the lives of others and the quality of our collective work, we won’t take the time necessary to build trust. This demonstration of care includes being considerate of the real or perceived needs, fears, wants, goals, and desires of others, without judgement.

As we all know from one experience or another, the trust relationship is fraught with consistency pitfalls, gaps in caring and communication as well as situations where, as noted in the book, *Crucial Conversations*, opinions differ, emotions are strong, and the stakes are high. Leaders and Team

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Members alike assume responsibility when they do not provide others with the benefit of the doubt and when their decisions are rooted in feelings and perceptions rather than facts and reality, all of which results in diminished trust.

The irony of trust is that it takes the longest amount of time to build but can be lost in the “blink of an eye” – one comment, one email, one choice, one decision, one moment of anger can erode or obliterate trust. At the end of each day, others get to decide if they trust you with the quality of their lives and the quality of their work. It is the responsibility of the leader to build and earn trust.

If we want to build trust in our role as a leader, it is helpful to develop three types of awareness:

- Intellectual awareness
- Emotional awareness
- Situational awareness

In order to develop awareness, it will take:

- Self-examination/reflection – identifying self-limiting thinking and behavioral tendencies
- Behavior modification
- Focus shift – from self to others

Each of us undoubtedly engages in some degree of self-limiting beliefs and behaviors, about ourselves or others. Those self-limiting beliefs and behaviors, whether intellectual, emotional, psychological, spiritual, or rooted in a lack of self-awareness in terms of how our behavior may impact others, create barriers to our effectiveness and limit our ability to build trust and demonstrate caring.

To do the real work of being and becoming more effective, take steps to detach from your paradigms and preferences and objectively examine what your constituents need, and or think they need. Assess and evaluate while avoiding judgement. People believe they know their needs, understand their needs, and further, seek to fill their needs in their own unique way/manner/method. Understanding their needs and their perceptions will provide you with the “answers to the test” of how to demonstrate caring and create the pathway to meeting people where they are, with the goal of never leaving them where you found them!

Warren Bennis provides an overview of “four ingredients leaders have that generate and sustain trust.” We encourage you to use the Discussion Guide attached as a tool to help grow and develop as a leadership team and to personally reflect on what behavior modification may be helpful to you in your role as a leader. Far too frequently, we meet with teams of Leader Managers responsible for growing people and organizations who find themselves at a stalemate. Trust is low, criticism is high, silos abound, and results are spotty and sporadic.

Fingers are pointed at others highlighting ways in which fellow Leader Managers are failing or have performance and communication gaps. Leader Managers on the team are convinced the key to achieving results, growth, and success lies in the behavioral change of their team member rather than themselves. They will absolutely make a change if, and only if, their colleague will change *first*.

Recently, the 1953 classic Abbott and Costello Who's On First? comedy skit came to mind. If you are not familiar with one of the funniest and most historic comedic vignettes, you may want to view it [here](#). Sadly, far too many Leader Managers are like Abbott and Costello, waiting for someone, somewhere, sometime to go first, or make the first move so we can get off first base. There is a book entitled *Leaders Eat Last* intimating leaders put the needs of others first. I heartedly agree and would add, leaders *need* to go first in putting the needs of others first.

Effective leaders are the first to take initiative to move toward others and to examine their motives, actions, behaviors, and communication style to determine how they can open doors and build relationships. Trust must be voluntarily given by inspiring and connecting with people. If we seek to compel action or results through force (for example, compelling involuntary acts or strict adherence to rules), we will not achieve desired results and efforts for growth and development, and progress will be stalled or stymied altogether. Trust cannot be demanded or expected, it can *only* be earned.

At trust's core is the habit and discipline of making and keeping promises to others each day. One of the most effective ways to build trust and demonstrate caring is to make and keep promises; promises rooted in meeting the needs of others. Leaders do not determine the amount of grace, patience or development others need in order to be and become the most effective version of themselves. They can only choose to discern how to provide or invest in an individual without regard to whom they may like or have a personal affinity for. Leaders provide dignity, respect, affirmation, and clarity to others and have developed the ability to dispassionately engage with others regardless of how they "feel" about an individual.

Team members, and certainly you and I, can be challenging to like, or love even on our best days. May we all be compelled to care deeply about the quality of the lives of others, the quality of the work we do with and for others, and the results we achieve together. We wish you the courage, willingness, and initiative necessary as you take the first steps in seeking to build trust by demonstrating caring, leading to the achievement of the highest quality of life and quality of work possible, both now and in the years to follow!

-LS

## February Discussion Questions

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**Question #1. We have found it is easy to identify the gaps in colleagues' behavior that limits our ability to trust them. Take time to reflect and identify one or two ways in which you can initiate and move towards others to build trust.**

Reflection:

Conclusion/Decision:

Action:

Result:

**Question #2. Review the definition of trust outlined in February's TOTM. What do you agree with? What do you disagree with? Is there anything you would add, remove or change?**

Reflection:

Conclusion/Decision:

Action:

Result:

**Question #3. Go to page 9 of the Discussion Guide (next page). Under each Ingredient provide two examples: #1) A time you witnessed a Leader demonstrate the ingredient, #2) What action will you take to live out each ingredient.**

Reflection:

Conclusion/Decision:

Action:

Result:

## February Discussion Guide Addendum

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*On Becoming a Leader; Warren Bennis*

*The Four Ingredients to Generate and Sustain Trust (pg. 152)*

- **Constancy.** Whatever surprises leaders themselves may face, they don't create any for the group. Leaders are all of a piece; they stay the course.
- **Congruity.** Leaders walk their talk. In true leaders, there is no gap between the theories they espouse and the life they practice.
- **Reliability.** Leaders are there when it counts; they are ready to support their co-workers in the moments that matter.
- **Integrity.** Leaders honor their commitments and promises.

## March Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Both-And Thinking***

**“Our leaders transform experience into wisdom and, in turn, transform the cultures of their organizations.”**

Warren Bennis, Page 145, *On Becoming A Leader*

As the extraordinary roaring 20s of this century continue to unfold, developing a leadership mindset is crucial beyond measure. Effective leadership does not happen without the personal development of the leader themselves. Leadership is a matter of will, the will to *grow first, go first, and put others first*. Management legend Peter Drucker once said, ‘The only things that happen naturally in organizations are friction, confusion, and underperformance. Everything else takes leadership.’

Effective leaders are willing to spend the requisite amount of time in self-reflection for the purpose of assessing and evaluating how they may be and become more effective. The groundwork of effective leadership happens in the head and heart of a leader. This month we are exploring the concept of developing a both-and mindset versus holding onto an unproductive either-or mindset, and how to gain experience that transfers and translates into wisdom.

F. Scott Fitzgerald stated, “The *test* of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing views in one’s mind and still retain the ability to function.” Developing a leadership mindset means putting ourselves to test by engaging in experiences that require us to enlarge our thinking.

Jim Collins, author of *Built To Last*, expands on the genius of “**and**” versus the tyranny of “**or**” beautifully and writer Tom Collins summarizes Jim Collins’ insights on both-and thinking:

*“Builders of greatness reject the “Tyranny of the **OR**” and embrace the “Genius of the **AND**.” They embrace both extremes across a number of dimensions at the same time—purpose **AND** profit, continuity **AND** change, freedom **AND** responsibility, discipline **AND** creativity, humility **AND** will, empirical analysis **AND** decisive action.”*

[Fernando Gros shares](#) “Either-or can also be understood in the construct of binary thinking: presenting a choice between two ideas, A or B, when there’s another choice, C, and maybe D and E as well. In order to arrive at either-or, you must bring into play some logical sleight of hand, leaving out alternatives and disengaging from possibilities thinking thus possibly shutting down effective options and feedback from colleagues.” While either-or thinking creates tunnel vision, both-and thinking broadens our view from wherever we stand and enables us to see, hear and view more options and opportunities around us (check out [Wendy Leggett’s article here](#) to read more about her application both-and thinking in coaching).

Yet here is where a significant piece of our challenge lies. As Warren indicates in his list comparing **management** thinking and behavior with **leadership** thinking and behavior, we are taught and trained to manage however, we must learn to lead. The irony with many individuals in leadership roles is they tend

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to be highly qualified subject matter experts with above average intellectual capacity and self-motivation. Our human tendency then is to project our perspective and expectations onto others thinking they should respond with like capacity, self-direction, and self-motivation.

There is little benefit in fighting an either-or war, there will be significant relational and transactional casualties. Collaboration cannot occur in an either-or environment. Either-or thinking creates winners or losers. You are either for me or against me. You support the project, or you don't. Either-or thinking creates relational aggression and roadblocks to problem solving and erodes trust.

Indications that a Leader Manager may be engaging in either-or thinking to the detriment of themselves and others can be:

- Detachment from Team Members or involvement in collaboration groups
- Communication breakdowns requiring mediation or third-party intervention
- Repeated instances of direct or in-direct conflict with others in the workplace

In extreme cases, a leader may impose ultimatums on others and will refuse to communicate with, or work with other members of their team. When that situation occurs, it is a tragic failure of leadership and challenging at best to restore individuals and teams to high performing status.

The both-and thinking approach can allow a Leader Manager to hold fast, but not too fast, to one's ideas, perspectives, preferences, and beliefs while developing the ability to allow others to be heard, gain insight into their perspective and dialogue in meaningful ways to arrive at solutions without creating conflict and without aggression. The Harvard Business Review published [an excellent article](#) on the challenges of either-or thinking and addresses our thought biases.

Both-and thinking means we have to get comfortable being uncomfortable. Sometimes that discomfort will be within ourselves as leaders and in other instances, the source of the discomfort will emanate from the interactions with those around us in the workplace, whether the CEO, a peer, or our direct leader manager. We can both act with a sense of urgency and extend patience.

There is the messy middle we find ourselves in when we need to deliver services and products to Clients and Customers in a timely matter and informally coach a colleague in real time by providing feedback when there is underperformance or engagement in self-limiting behavior. This tension between management/performance and leadership/development is where Leader Managers live each day. All human beings are both thinking and feeling creatures. We are not exclusively all feeling or all thinking.

When we take a moment to think about living in/with a both-and-mindset, it truly is the reality of life. You and I can be young and old, rich, and poor, a master and an apprentice at the very same time.

As you consider ways to practice expanding your capacity and both/and thinking, challenge yourself to engage in healthy, helpful, and appropriate experiences that may cause personal discomfort. This is certain to result in greater levels of leadership effectiveness and outcomes.

From engaging in a dialogue with someone who holds a different perspective to engaging in a formal learning opportunity to committing to an intentional discipline – these are small yet perspective changing ways to shift our mindset.

Use the questions this month to surface the opportunities and challenges of expanding your own both-and thinking and framework. Remember both-and thinking is a choice, and requires conscious emotional, psychological, and intellectual intentionality to achieve the leadership mindset of both-and thinking.

Bennis writes, “There is magic in experience as well as wisdom. Crisis is so often the crucible in which leaders are formed.” Don’t wait for a crisis to occur to take steps to gain the experience to help you develop your leadership mindset and effectiveness. Act now to *grow first, go first, and put others first*.

-LS



## March Discussion Questions

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**Question #1. Consider for a moment any previous professional experiences that have “enlarged” or expanding your thinking and gave you a refreshed or new perspective. What factors do you believe influenced or contributed to your engagement with this experience? Were they voluntary or involuntary factors? Is it a repeatable experience? If professional experiences to do not come to mind, consider any personal experiences.**

Reflection:

Conclusion/Decision:

Action:

Result:

**Question #2. Define management thinking and behavior and leadership thinking and behavior. How are they different? How are they similar? Consider asking one or two colleagues or team members for their definitions. What did you agree with and what would you expand on or add to?**

Reflection:

Conclusion/Decision:

Action:

Result:

**Question #3. List 2-3 professional experiences you can engage in during 2022 that would “make your stomach hurt.” Attend a seminar, obtain a certification, engage in a dialogue with someone who holds a different perspective, read a book with an opposing viewpoint, volunteer to participate in, teach, lead or facilitate a new project or assignment, commit to a daily professional discipline or anything else you might think of.**

Reflection:

Conclusion/Decision:

Action:

Result:

## April Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Meet People Where They Are***

**“When people lead at a higher level, they make the world a better place because in addition to results and relationships, their goals are focused on the greater good.”**

Ken Blanchard and Renee Broadwell  
*Servant Leadership In Action*

Thank you for investing the time with us in 2022 as we explore the 12 tenets of Developing A Leadership Mindset. We hope the concepts and principles shared here will bring you value and be of benefit to you as you develop yourself and develop others in your leadership role.

If we truly desire to lead at a higher level, we have found it is nearly impossible, or at the very least, highly improbable, that sustained individual and organizational success occurs unless Leaders are willing and able to meet people where they are.

Leaders are called to build trust by demonstrating caring and to consciously enhance the quality of life and the quality of work of those they lead. Compelling or coercing compliance and adherence to rules rarely, if ever, achieves desired results and outcomes. It certainly never results in highly engaged, empowered, and equipped Team Members.

Meeting people where they are begins with a Leader’s willingness to embrace the philosophy of servant leadership. Without a servant leader mindset and discipline, one’s self-interest will rule the day and ultimately individual and organizational outcomes and effectiveness.

Robert K. Greenleaf, former AT&T CEO, developed the concept of servant leadership and introduced the thinking in his original essay, “The Servant as Leader” in 1970. More than fifty years later the understanding and practice of servant leadership is being pursued and ever evolving across the globe.

Mr. Greenleaf’s work has spawned decades of study, training, and implementation of servant leadership practices. Leadership guru and another revered father of leadership development, Ken Blanchard, wrote extensively about the concepts and practices of servant leadership in the book we will be sourcing for the second quarter 2022 Tool of the Month, “*Servant Leadership in Action.*”

Servant leadership requires the mental and emotional agility to engage in developing an effective leadership mindset. Both and thinking, which we explored in the March Tool of the Month, is at the core of servant leadership.

Ken Blanchard describes two aspects of servant leadership:

- A visionary/direction or strategic role—the leadership aspect of service leadership; and
- An implementation, or operational role—the servant aspect of servant leadership

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Servant leadership is often misunderstood, and sometimes rejected, as the language of servant leadership may connote a subservient posture, indecisiveness, and weakness. In a world where power, position, title, and authority are held in high regard, meeting people where they are may seem unwise, unproductive, and even nonsensical.

From my perspective, servant leadership means an intentional focus on creating environments where individuals and teams can become the most effective and engaged versions of themselves while ensuring organizational and operational effectiveness. Very simply, it means helping people grow and organizations grow and putting their needs first.

Central to the concept of servant leadership is meeting people where *they* are. Becoming a servant leader, meeting people where they are, and practicing service leadership, requires a conscious, intentional choice. It is a life impacting decision which requires a lifelong shift in perspective, mindset, and skill set.

Before we explore meeting people where they are further, I would like to clarify that it is vital to meet people where they are however *never* leave them where you found them.

As Leaders, individuals most commonly find themselves in roles and positions of leadership, ironically, not due to their leadership ability or expertise, but due to their subject matter expertise. As humans, we tend to project our expectations for performance and behavior on others.

We have found individuals possess a range of self-sufficiency in the workplace:

- **ESSP - Extremely Self-sufficient People** – generally 2% of the workforce
  - Risk takers
  - High sense of drive
  - Innovators
  - Strong sense of self
  - Independent thinkers with a bias toward action
  - Can be highly entrepreneurial
  - Low need for approval and affirmation from others
- **HSSP - Highly Self-sufficient People** – generally 18% of the workforce
  - Strong sense of responsibility for self
  - Subject matter experts (“A” students)
  - Consistent, reliable, dependable
  - Self-directed
  - Learners and achievers
  - Desire to make a contribution/recognized for performance
- **VDSS – Varying Degrees of Self-sufficiency** – generally 80% of the workforce
  - Value and appreciate clarity and direction
  - Generally willing
  - Specialists
  - Bias towards responsiveness versus initiative

- Value and need affirmation, recognition, and appreciation
- Consistency, reliability, and dependability tied to circumstances
- Reliance on external versus internal motivation

Regardless of your self-sufficiency assessment, every human engages in some form of self-limiting behavior. Should our extreme or high degree of self-sufficiency prevent us from meeting people where they are, that becomes self-limiting behavior.

Leaders have a strong belief everyone has intrinsic value and is deserving of respect and dignity. Meeting people where they are does not mean lowering standards of behavior, performance outcomes or ignoring results. It does mean adjusting expectations and providing others with the “4 Cs” of leadership we introduced in January; caring, clarity, communication, and consistency. As leaders, we do not have the liberty of deciding what other people need from us.

Servant leaders recognize individuals are doing the best with can with what they have and what they know. Meeting people where they are takes grace, humility, and patience for yourself and others. It takes humility to recognize we all engage in self-limiting behavior and to develop a willingness to give people what they need from you. Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less and focusing on uncovering, understanding, and meeting the needs of others.

Meeting people where they are means becoming a student of other people’s behavior. Seeking to understand their preferred communication style, level of change readiness, their paradigms, filters traumas, triggers, strengths, goals, hopes and greatest challenges.

As Leaders who accept the responsibility of growing people and growing organizations, we are both responsible for coaching behavior and managing performance. I am convinced the more time we invest in meeting people where they are by coaching behavior, the less we will have to manage performance.

Spend time using the formal monthly 1-1 meeting process to coach behavior by engaging in dialogue to help your Team Member become more self-aware. Provide clarity and coach specific behavior by making specific requests; as Brené Brown exhorts, “clear is kind.”

Assess their capacity, their degree of emotional intelligence, how well they tolerate anxiety, ambiguity, and pressure. Look for signs that may mean they are hesitating or reluctant to engage - they may lack courage or trust in themselves, the process, or in you as their Leader Manager. Adjust your pace and ask Team Members how much clarity, information, time, support, and details they might need or want. Invite questions - questions can be clarity seeking mechanisms rather than oppositional behavior.

Differentiate between your capacity, perspective, communication style and expectations that you need and those that your Team Member needs. For example – people may have a sense of urgency, but they might not recognize they do not, or do not know how, to *display* a sense of urgency. Utilizing effective coaching techniques will help meet an individual where they are resulting in individual growth.

As a coach, remember, all progress an individual makes is some progress. If you meet people where they are, cheer their progress and recognize the relativity of that progress, you will most likely experience more progress!

Cautions to meeting people where they are may include engaging in ruinous empathy as Kim Scott identifies and describes in her book *Radical Candor*. If, over the appropriate amount of time, energy and resources are invested in meeting people where they are, it may be necessary, and wise, to find a role in the organization where they will be more effective. It takes wisdom to know when it is appropriate to transition a Team Member out of the organization.

I love the fact that Southwest Airlines guiding principles for all Team Members includes living with a Warrior Spirit, a Fun-Loving Attitude and a Servant's Heart. While no individual or organization will ever achieve perfection in this world, we can certainly emulate Southwest Airlines' commitment to each and every Team Member by demonstrating a servant's heart.

Robert Greenleaf stated, "the best test, and the most difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"

I encourage you to take the test and ask yourself, and most importantly those you lead, am I meeting others where *they* are?

-LS

## April Discussion Activity

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In Chapter 2, Larry Spears identifies 10 characteristics he believes contributes to the successful practice of servant leadership. Review the characteristics and discuss the following:

- Do I/we agree with this list of characteristics? Why or why not?
  
- Do I/we practice these characteristics in my/our roles within our organization?
  
- Which of the 10 characteristics would you modify and or what are the top 10 characteristics of a servant leader in our organization?

(The characteristics and their description can be found on page 15 of *Servant Leadership in Action*)

1. Listening
2. Empathy
3. Healing
4. Awareness
5. Persuasion
6. Conceptualization
7. Foresight
8. Stewardship
9. Commitment to the growth of people
10. Building community

## May Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Start with, and share, the WHY***

**“Though someone may choose servant leadership for the results,  
the reason we continue to practice the discipline is for the joy of the journey.”**

Simon Sinek

Welcome to May's Tool of the Month where we will be exploring the fifth tenet of our 2022 Developing A Leadership Mindset, ***Start with and share the WHY***. We count it a privilege to share the leadership journey of growth and development with you and are grateful for the chance to join you along the way, it certainly defines *our why!*

Starting with and sharing the why, is the birthplace of creating an environment where Team Members can be and become the most effective versions of themselves. Sharing the why of everything brings clarity which leads to ownership, accountability, empowerment, and mutual passion and is one of the most overlooked and underutilized practices in organizations. Simon Sinek does a remarkable job in his book, *Start with Why* of articulating the power of *sharing the why*.

To paraphrase, Sinek communicates that inspired companies and inspired leaders understand and learn the discipline of sharing the why. Regardless of their size or their industry, inspired leaders think, act, and communicate from the inside out. At the core of each individual (inside a Team Members' brain) is the key to motivation, and it starts with sharing the why.

Why might leaders struggle with sharing the why? Two possible reasons, 1) as leaders we may lack self-awareness and or 2), we are consciously or unconsciously acting in our own self-interest. Both reasons lead to self-limiting leadership behavior tragically resulting in limiting individuals and the organizations we serve.

A lack of self-awareness can lead to an inability to discern how our behavior is perceived by others, what others may need from us, and or may be negatively impacting others. It is also quite possible extremely or highly self-sufficient leaders may project their level of self-sufficiency, for example, their ability to navigate the unknown or be resourceful by simply 'figuring things out,' or project their performance expectations and abilities on others.

Self-interest also creates lids on individual and organizational effectiveness and may result when we simply do not have the time, motivation, energy, willingness, or interest in taking the time to share the why. Taking the time to meet people where they are, provide the degree of clarity an individual needs and ensure the why is understood can be time-consuming, challenging, and frankly may feel exhausting.

As leaders we usually have 100% of the information 100% of the time. Cascading the why throughout an organization is a critical responsibility of a leader. Ensuring the why not only cascades but permeates an organization is key to providing clarity to asked *and* unasked questions.

Simon Sinek shares in his essay in *Servant Leadership in Action*, “we can turn healthy cultures into a thriving one filled with trust and cooperation. To maintain a servant leadership culture we must keep caring, serving, trusting, and earning trust.” Servant leaders develop the discipline of listening to others to discern their need for clarity and intentionally choose to invest the time and energy to provide the answers to the why questions. Leading with intense curiosity surfaces struggles, challenges, limitations, and questions others may have that they do not have the ability or will to share themselves.

Before age 10, WHY is the most asked question in your world. When we reach a certain age, we are all too often conditioned to stop asking why aloud and comply in order to be deemed included, effective, and sometimes even wise.

Fundamentally and initially, we ask questions to make sense of the world around us and to provide a perspective on the context in which we live and operate each day. A quick Google search reveals that children ages 4 to 8 ask from 73 to 400 questions each day. Adults average 6 questions per day. Logic would say that as we age and grow, we know more and learn more, therefore we ask less questions. However, reality would challenge logic in that any one individual could not know, experience, or learn all there is to know, experience, or learn in a single lifetime.

Familiar responses to why include, because we have always done it that way, because I told you to, because I am too tired to explain/answer, because I don't have time to answer, because it's easier if you just comply! Leaders know that why never goes away, it simply goes underground and rears its unclear head at the most inopportune moments. Humans are also security and stability seeking creatures by nature. We possess a deep-seated desire to create an environment that feels known, comfortable, and safe to varying degrees. The varying degrees to which we seek certainty, comfort, and predictability is as varied as there are individuals, and there are 7.5 billion individuals and climbing on this planet.

Starting with and sharing the why is the sacred and vital link between individual and collective perspective and context. Context is the “box” we each live in, and perspective is the world that surrounds us for the purpose of this analogy. We tend to see things from our box, or corner of the world, and fail to ‘get outside of the box’ to gain perspective on the world in which we live and operate, which can explain the why.

If leaders do not fill the gap between a Team Member's perspective and context, the gap will be filled by individual experience, filters, and paradigms. Individuals may seek minimal clarity from folks within their immediate sphere however, generally the potentially inaccurate conclusions reached about why may be significantly out of alignment with the real organizational or operational reason why.

A chef at a world-famous restaurant was training a highly qualified and rising culinary arts student. The chef was demonstrating how to prepare a sizeable, extremely expensive and rare cut of beef for a large party requiring several portions of the beef. The chef carefully and exquisitely handled and prepared the beef as the rapt apprentice looked on. With each cut the chef delicately sliced two inches off the end of each portion of the beef before sending to the searing pan. Curious the young student timidly asked the chef, “why slice each end of the beef before adding it to the pan, I've never witnessed that technique first-hand?” The chef paused and thought for a moment and replied, “the chef before me taught me this technique.”



Now intensely curious, the chef dialed his mentor and inquired, “why did you slice each end of the beef? I have a young student with me, and I would like to ensure they understand the reason you achieved the level of greatness you achieved, your technique and reputation far exceeds any I have ever known. Why did you slice each end of the beef?” The great mentor paused for a moment to reflect and explained, “in the early days of the restaurant the owner could not afford to purchase the size and variety of pans I needed to do my best work. I simply learned to slice down the cuts of meat to fit the pans we had on hand!”

Always start with and share the why if you have a desire to create environments where people can be and become the most effective versions of themselves and produce the highest quality results! As leaders, I am convinced engaging in the discipline of starting with and sharing the why is the proverbial silver bullet for achieving the highest levels of individual and organizational effectiveness and provides the vital clarity, whether recognized or unrecognized, by individuals needed to grow and develop.

Starting with and sharing the why demonstrates a leader’s ability to live out the hallmarks of the “4 Cs of Leadership” (Caring, Clarity, Communication, and Consistency). Leaders can develop organizational disciplines that provide methods to institutionalize the practice of starting with and sharing the why:

- Ensure written documents clearly articulate and define your organization’s why
- Ensure the Team Member Experience Path includes clearly defined whys at each of the seven steps in the Experience Path (Recruiting, Hiring, Orientation & Onboarding, Training, Immersion, Performance Development & Coaching, Separation)
- Identify organizational and operational functions that address the why from a cultural perspective *and* an operational perspective
- Create and implement mechanisms that repeat and reinforce the why at the Individual, Team, and Organizational level

Organizational why can, and should be, found in values, vision, mission statements, codes of conduct, rules of engagement, customer service promises, and in our organizational model, your “D-N-A.” Starting with and sharing the why should always be aligned with a focus on the greater good and a shared passion for creating an enduring organization that leads to long-term sustainability.

As Simon Sinek says, “Though someone may choose servant leadership for the results, the reason we continue to practice the discipline is for the joy of the journey.” The most useful information in the entire world is just one question away. Start with why. We wish you much joy for your journey as you start with and share the why each step of the way!

-LS

**Book Resources:**

[\*Start with Why, Leaders Eat Last, Together is Better, and Find Your Why\*](#), Simon Sinek

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## May Discussion Activity

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**Ten why questions to be explored, asked, and answered with your Team Members:**

1. Why do we exist?
2. Why did this organization get started?
3. Why does what we do matter? Why does what we do make a difference?
4. Why did we choose the values we've chosen?
5. Why do we care?
6. Why do we sell, deliver, or create the products and services we offer?
7. Why do I care? Why do I work here?
8. Why do we do what we do the way we do it?
9. Why do we give back and get involved in our community?
10. Why do we chose the team members, partners, suppliers, and vendors we've chosen?

## June Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Get comfortable being uncomfortable – do what makes your stomach hurt!***

***“If you search inside yourself, you will find your truth.”***

*James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, Finding Your Voice Essay, Page 109*

Ken Blanchard and Renee Broadwell

*Servant Leadership in Action*

Every decade is characterized by unique circumstances. The decade we find ourselves in is no exception. As we explore the tenets of Developing a Leadership Mindset in 2022, this month we will introduce the practice of *getting comfortable being uncomfortable*.

Effective leadership and developing a leadership mindset, require engaging in the life-long habit and discipline of introspection which builds our ability to recognize, surface, and process emotions, and respond appropriately to ourselves and others. Leadership consultants and authors, Kouzes and Posner, in their essay in *Servant Leadership in Action* state, “to lead others, you have to learn to lead yourself.”

Developing a leadership mindset also means forsaking a life of ease, convenience, and personal preferences. M. Scott Peck, author of one of my favorite reads, *The Road Less Traveled*, opens his book with the following three words, “**life is difficult.**” Peck beautifully explores our tendency as humans to go to extraordinary lengths to avoid what is difficult, and by doing so, ironically, we create more, and in most instances, greater levels of dysfunction and difficulty.

Introspection calls for the development of the characteristics of humility, willingness, courage, and grace for oneself and others. Developing authenticity and transparency is also rooted in our self-reflection and provides us with a platform to give greater levels of grace to others. It is the soil in which empathy can grow as we search inside ourselves to find our truth. The path to self-examination and the process of “finding one’s truth” has the potential to make us uncomfortable, hence we may avoid the very reality we need.

Getting comfortable being uncomfortable means being willing to take the road less traveled by developing the ability to manage and navigate conflict effectively. We believe it requires, what we fondly refer to as, “doing what makes your stomach hurt.” Practicing the discipline of introspection and mastering the ability to manage and navigate conflict effectively requires embracing discomfort.

For more than ten years we have had the privilege of teaching our cornerstone class, [Managing From The Inside Out](#). I wish we would have started recording the response to the Session 1 Peer Interview question “What is one thing you avoid?”. Without question, the number one response we receive is, “conflict!” We have learned a significant number of leaders do not embrace conflict, which, ironically, is

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exactly what we need them to do for the individuals and teams in our organizations to be more effective!

If we are to become equipped as effective leaders, it is essential we develop the ability to engage in difficult conversations and share facts and feelings that may be unwelcomed, resisted, or unwanted. Leaders have a responsibility to “face the brutal facts” as Jim Collins unpacks in the business classic *Good to Great*. Leadership requires a willingness to address underperformance, conflict among teams, financial challenges, and change resistance without simply asserting authority, wielding power, position, or title or playing the “because I am the boss and I say so” card.

Our preference and tendency, understandably, is to avoid the emotional, relational, and psychological pain and the feelings of discomfort conflict brings. Fear of looking bad and/or fear of feeling bad, consciously or unconsciously, may also be a source of stomachache. We may need to have a conversation with ourselves or another individual or team of people and that requires learning to give and receive feedback in an authentic, transparent manner. Taking the high road, rather than avoiding challenging people or situations, means walking through valleys and navigating the messiness and discomfort of uncomfortable situations. Brené Brown refers to it as “rumbling.” Rumbling means rolling up our emotional sleeves and working through communication and situational challenges with others.

If your stomach isn’t hurting as a leader, you are most likely in a comfortable place, and that place is potentially ineffective. We are security and stability seeking creatures of comfort as Drs. Brandt and Kriegel’s research in *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers* demonstrates. The powerful and insightful change ready tool Brandt and Kriegel developed identifies seven traits of change readiness that can be measured. We have administered the tool to a considerable number of leader managers and for 90% of the respondents, trait seven or Tolerance for Ambiguity, and trait two or Adventurousness, are the two lowest scoring traits. Getting comfortable being uncomfortable appears to be a universal challenge!

Mark Twain once said, “courage isn’t the absence of fear, it’s acting in spite of fear.” Leaders recognize the ache in their stomach can be a positive signal. If we learn to pay attention to, and act appropriately on the stomachache, we will have the opportunity to be and become more effective. The signal the stomachache provides can serve as a positive window into the need to right a wrong, seek greater levels of clarity, correct an injustice, or take responsibility to hold oneself accountable. If we dull the ache with denial, defensiveness, avoidance, etc., the ache will most certainly dissipate over time. It may then take extraordinary circumstances, such as the loss of a relationship or a significant failure, to face the source of the stomachache and act appropriately. Effectiveness is not “microwaveable”, and we will most likely lengthen the development timeline when we engage in avoidance or denial.

Getting comfortable being uncomfortable means leaning in and being curious about one’s own needs and the needs of others. Do I have a need for recognition or acceptance, power, admiration, or control that is unhealthy? What am I afraid of, and why am I avoiding what makes my stomach hurt rather than embracing the opportunity to be and become more effective?

**Critical questions for consideration that may make your stomach hurt:**

- How well do I accurately, transparently, and authentically know myself?

- How well do I understand the needs of others as they perceive them?
- How effectively do I speak and share the truth, facts, and feelings?
- How well do I understand how my behavior impacts others?

Each time we do what makes our stomach hurt we increase our capacity for effectiveness. We all have a capacity box, and our box is a certain size based upon our current level of ability and functionality. The more often we shrink from doing what makes our stomach hurt, the smaller our box becomes. Conversely, when we engage in difficult conversations and take the first step in addressing and navigating conflict, our capacity box grows.

We like a straight path, clear expectations, and abundant resources. Instead, what we get as leader managers (and humans!) are detours, opposition, and challenges. Leadership is getting on and staying on the high road. Leaders make people around them better by setting those around them up for success and encouraging them to be more effective than they would have been without your presence. Living, leading, and doing what makes your stomach hurt is a willful act, and that is how courage is defined; a willful act that benefits others, most likely entailing some measure of personal sacrifice. That sacrifice may be time, energy, money, ego, pride. A sacrifice is always made when progress occurs.

As you lead and manage those around you this month, may you embrace discomfort, engage in crucial conversations, courageously make sacrifices, delve into deeper levels of introspection, and practice grace, humility, and patience. Remember our effectiveness and our capacity for becoming comfortable being uncomfortable is elastic and our capacity box has the ability to grow as we search for, identify, and live out our truth. For that I am exceedingly grateful.

-LS

## June Discussion Activity

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### **TAKE ACTION: Questions to be explored, asked, and answered with your Team Members:**

1. Spend time reflecting on your leadership philosophy, communication style, and defining your truth as it relates to the type of leader you aspire to be and become.
2. Invest in tools to help your self-awareness. (e.g., DiSC, Myers-Briggs, Change Ready Profile, CliftonStrengths, and Leadership Practices Inventory)
3. Ask your Direct Reports and Peers to provide you with insight into one to three ways in which you can be more helpful to them.
4. Meet with your Leadership Team Members to discuss how comfortable your Team is being uncomfortable, both individually and collectively.
5. Identify one to three ways you and your Team can 'do what makes your stomach hurt' by addressing positive steps towards greater levels of effectiveness.

## July Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Seek & Provide Clarity***

***“...genuine teamwork in most organizations remains as elusive as it ever has been.”***

Patrick Lencioni  
*The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team*

I love clarity. Clarity is a gift we give others. Clarity can be painful and scary; however, clarity provides the proverbial answers to the test. I love clarity, although, I am more than guilty of not providing clarity. To be transparent, I don't always love receiving clarity. Receiving clarity can be uncomfortable and perhaps even embarrassing, as it may reveal a personal bias, poor listening skills, inattention, or a lack of my own self-awareness.

I love clarity but I might not like giving and receiving clarity. However, I am convinced one of the greatest gifts a leader can give is the gift of clarity, and the willingness to foster an environment where others on their Team are willing and capable of also giving the gift of clarity.

Developing a Leadership Mindset means modeling the practice of seeking and providing clarity, which is the seventh tenet we will be exploring as 2022 continues to unfold. This new quarter, we will be referring to Patrick Lencioni's *5 Dysfunctions of a Team*, in which he examines in-depth how the lack of clarity on a Team leads to dysfunction number three, ***lack of commitment***.

Mr. Lencioni identifies the 5 Dysfunctions of a Team as:

1. Absence of Trust (Status and Ego)
2. Fear of Conflict (Low Standards)
3. Lack of Commitment (Ambiguity)
4. Avoidance of Accountability (Artificial Harmony)
5. Inattention to Results (Invulnerability)

Ambiguity and the lack of clarity is the birthplace and breeding ground of lack of trust, lack of commitment, and lack of vulnerability which may result in significant individual, team, and organizational dysfunction. When we as leaders are not clear about our intent and expectations, we set others up for missing the mark and falling short of desired outcomes, if not complete failure. Low clarity equals low commitment levels which can lead to poor morale and results, thus genuine teamwork is as elusive as ever.

Undoubtedly, seeking and providing clarity requires valuable resources to ensure others receive the level of clarity they need and desire. Frankly, it can be exhausting to wade into the murky waters we call communication transactions or interactions. We tend to prefer stating our case, making a request, and efficiently and effectively receiving the results we desire from others.

A host of factors may impact clarity seeking effectiveness among teams and between individuals, including:

- The culture of an organization – healthy or unhealthy
- The effectiveness of the organizational disciplines and planning processes in place
- Level of disclosure and transparency leaders demonstrate
- Varying degrees of sufficiency of Team Members
- Preferred communication styles of Team Members
- Individual, team, and organizational levels of change readiness
- Deference to title, power, position, or perceived level of authority within your organization

Highly self-sufficient leaders tend to project the level of their need for clarity, ability, or capacity consciously or unconsciously onto others – in my experience when clarity is not provided to the degree another person needs, it is usually due to under-awareness or unawareness, not a lack of caring. Similarly, it is vital for leaders to remember that they usually have 100% of the information and clarity 100% of the time. From that point, the level of clarity all “rolls downhill and diminishes” as it cascades throughout the organization to individual Team Members.

We have found the most effective clarity seeking mechanism Team Members use in the workplace are questions. Questions allow Team Members to seek information openly and honestly, obtain details, and understand the preferences of the leader for the purpose of doing their job more effectively. Tragically and inadvertently, leaders often shut down questions as they may perceive questions as:

- A lack of trust in their leadership
- A less than flattering view of the intellect of the leader
- The leader’s inability to perform their role effectively
- Negativity or pessimism
- Opposition, defiance, or insubordination

When a Team Member seeks clarity in the absence of clearly provided information, processes, or desired outcomes, they are simply and usually motivated by a desire to do their job to the best of their ability. Questions may be a reflection of a Team Member’s perspective, need for detail, level of resourcefulness and problem-solving ability, change readiness and ability to grasp concepts and/or self-navigate.



No matter how much we wish we could, we as leaders do not get to decide how much clarity an individual needs from us or our organization to be able to do their job effectively. As measured by the Change Ready Profile found in Drs. Brandt and Kriegel's book, *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers*, the majority of Team Members have a significantly low tolerance for ambiguity. Keeping this in mind, we as leaders, must invite, foster, and encourage questions at every turn. When we respond with impatience, defensiveness, or poor listening skills, there is an immediate performance gap created. When we shut down questions, we essentially turn off the clarity faucet, impairing the flow of vital information and diminishing trust.

Patrick Lencioni, wrote another book, *The Advantage*, where he states, over-communicating clarity leads to organizational health. Leaders should spend the majority of their time, or at the very least as much time as others need from them, providing the vital and requisite levels of clarity as a critical function of their role. We can do this by ensuring there is an organizational discipline cadence that allows for giving and receiving feedback at the individual, team, and organizational levels, so that Team Members have consistent and frequent opportunities to seek and provide clarity.

Seeking and providing clarity also means using resourcefulness to build alliances, bridge gaps, and take initiative to create collaborative solutions to what may seem like an impossibility. When you approach others with a clarity seeking and curious mindset it can create an environment that draws others into the solution, fosters a sense of collaboration, demonstrates patience, and exemplifies leadership. It requires a leader to take psychological ownership of their role and responsibilities and to assume the mantle of providing clarity to the degree helpful to others.

As leadership icon Ken Blanchard states, "Feedback is the breakfast of champions!" Leaders have the opportunity to create environments where individuals feel safe and there is a high level of trust – people may need "permission" to seek clarity, and people may need to be coached to seek clarity. By coaching a Team Member's behavior, both formally and informally, on a consistent basis we create the foundation for seeking and providing clarity by fostering an environment of trust and transparency – it creates the very discipline missing that creates a lack of clarity. We can and should encourage our Teams and Team Members to learn to take initiative and seek clarity whenever they need clarity or whenever the level of clarity provided does not adequately meet their needs.

When there seems to be no clarity, no solution, and no way out of a situation that moment is exactly when leadership is needed! Characteristics leaders can focus on developing and modeling are grace, humility, emotional maturity, caring, courage, and patience, along with the vital skills of planning, project management, communication, and delegation.

To ensure genuine teamwork exists and produce high performing teams that deliver results, leaders must have a relentless focus on being as kind to themselves and others as possible by:

1. Developing themselves by acquiring the characteristics and skills needed to provide clarity
2. Developing others by equipping them through coaching to learn to seek clarity consistently
3. Creating and implementing organizational disciplines that ensure clarity is cascading effectively at the individual, team, and organization levels

As Brené Brown shares, “clear is kind.” Clarity is the gift that builds trust. Clarity provides the WHY. Clarity provides the HOW. Clarity sets and manages expectations. We encourage you to not wait for special occasions, anniversaries, or holidays to give the gift of clarity. Be kind to yourself and others.

-LS

## July Discussion Activity

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### **TAKE ACTION: 3-Steps to Improving Clarity**

1. Evaluate Signs +/- on page 197 in *The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team*
2. Utilize *The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team* Diagnostic tool – pages 191-194
3. Create and implement a written 12-month action plan based on your findings

## August Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Set & Manage Expectations***

***“The reality remains that teamwork ultimately comes down to practicing a small set of principles over a long period of time.”***

Patrick Lencioni  
*The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team*

Being part of a team and working together is very much like teaming up with a group of individuals and agreeing to hike a mountain. Everyone admires the beautiful mountain from a distance, commits to meeting at a time and place to take the hike, and subsequently makes their individual preparations, packs up, laces up, and starts the hike.

As the party begins the trek, some have packed light, some pack food and water, some overpack, and one or two of the hikers even bring an extra pair of shoes. The most experienced hikers bring cooking utensils, a safety kit, rain gear and emergency rations. Around mid-morning, the guide calls for a break and discovers more than half the hikers eagerly waiting for water and food rations to be distributed. Grumbling and discontentment spreads among the team as the hikers who did not bring supplies realize the gap in expectations. The likelihood of the entire team successfully reaching the summit disappears before the guide’s eyes.

The opening question in *Going Hiking? Don’t Forget These Safety Tips.*, a July 2022 New York Times article published by Derrick Bryson Taylor, was, “What should I do before the hike?” His answer? “Have a plan.” It is the role and responsibility of the leader to set each and every member of a team up for success and to do everything in their power to create an environment where each individual can be and become the most effective version of themselves. This month we are exploring the topic of setting and managing expectations as we focus on developing a leadership mindset throughout 2022. If we want to set others up for success, it is crucial leaders create, communicate, and implement a plan through every step of the team member experience path.

Just as you would develop a plan before a hike, a leader’s ability to create a high performing team focused on results begins with a plan. Gaps in setting and managing expectations occur in everyday settings; relationships, meetings, appointments, commitments as well as larger assignments and environments such as real estate moves, team member recruiting and hiring, geographic expansion, mergers and acquisitions, technology migration/software implementation, product launch, brand updates/refresh, etc., etc., etc.!

In our reading this quarter, Patrick Lencioni states, “An unrelenting focus on specific objectives and clearly defined outcomes is a requirement for any team that judges itself on performance.” I completely agree with Patrick Lencioni. The practice of an unrelenting focus on specific objectives would ensure we

could minimize tremendous dysfunction if we focused on the collective goals of a team in any organization. It begins by setting and managing expectations in every conversation, with every task, with every request, with every goal, and with every objective.

Setting and managing expectations can be challenging for leaders who have moved, or are moving from, player/coach to coach/player. As leaders we tend to ground our leadership behavior in our subject matter expertise and experience and we may be unaware or under-aware in how we are create barriers to the effective setting and managing of expectations with and for others. The health of the team, the ability level of the team members, the culture of the organization all impact the setting and managing expectations process. So, how can you tell if you and or members of your leadership team are not as effective as possible in setting and managing expectations? Here are a few red flags:

- Project deadlines are not met
- Desired results are not delivered
- Processes are not followed
- Customer complaints have a higher than acceptable level of frequency
- Morale is low and anxiety is high
- Team members may be suffering from change fatigue

My late stepmother used to say, “Laura, disappointment occurs when expectations are not met!” If you are a disappointed leader, leading an apprehensive or responsive (versus proactive) team, it may be a clear indication of your lack of effectiveness in setting and managing expectations. If we begin each task, each request, each road map with clear expectations, we minimize the need to reverse engineer actions taken by a colleague as well as the time needed to seek and provide clarity, ultimately setting others up for success by giving them the “answers to the test.” Setting and managing expectations effectively minimizes guesswork and increases the power of focus and intentionality.

Leaders have the ability to minimize the anxiety others experience therefore significantly positively impacting the quality of life and quality of work in organizations, a truly rewarding role in this world. Demonstrating the willingness to share information is powerful. However, a leader may unconsciously diminish their own power as a leader if they fail to recognize how much information and clarity around a process others need.

I am not suggesting team members are not capable of creating or navigating processes or intelligent enough to make decisions. I am suggesting leaders are the source of expectations and as such have a tremendous responsibility to clearly communicate those expectations with others to the degree and extent others need clarity. Setting and managing expectations is the grandparent of seeking and providing clarity.

The larger the team or geographic region, the number of locations or constituency groups, (including committee or board members involved or affected), the greater the need to set and manage expectations. To be effective at setting and managing expectations it takes a shift in a leader's mindset:

1. Think LIKE a Team Member not FOR a Team Member. Consider their paradigms and perspectives. Are they waiting for you to provide guidance, clarity, information, or grant permission?
  - Wages
  - Benefits
  - Incentives
  - Scope of their Role and Responsibilities
  - The Authority/Permission Continuum
  - Behavioral Norms for the Team Member versus the Leader
  - Performance and Results Expectations
  - Feedback, Affirmation, Validation Needs and Expectations
  
2. AVOID projecting. If you hear yourself saying, either out loud or to yourself, the following phrases:
  - "If that were me..."
  - "Here's how I like to be managed..."
  - "Here's what I would do..."
  - "Here's how I decide..."

...that's a sure sign you are thinking FOR other people, not LIKE other people. It is perfectly normal and natural to think FOR other people, it's just not HHA (Healthy, Helpful or Appropriate)!
  
3. Spend the prerequisite amount of time uncovering expectations and learn to anticipate needs.
  - Needs analysis
  - Questioning
  - Listening
  - Ask the Question behind the Question

Leaders who set and manage expectations effectively engage in disciplined and institutionalized planning processes at the individual, team, and organization-wide level. Robust planning processes provide the vehicle and mechanism for setting, managing, and cascading expectations continuously throughout the organization and team by minimizing ambiguity and providing extreme clarity. Certainly, not all things can be planned for or anticipated as planning is certainly fluid and it must also be consistent and intentional. It is both an art and a science.

When leaders invest the time in providing extreme clarity around expectations an environment of clarity is created, trust finds deep roots, and team members are empowered to focus on navigating the processes step by step that lead to desired outcomes and results. To paraphrase Patrick Lencioni's observation from the *5 Dysfunctions of a Team* at the beginning of this article, setting and managing expectations is a small principle that when practiced consistently results in an ordinary group of people creating extraordinary results.

In his article, *Going Hiking? Don't Forget These Safety Tips.*, Mr. Taylor provides advice for two scenarios hikers may encounter. First, "What if I get lost?" and second, "Severe weather has interrupted my hike. Now what?" His advice centers around, "don't panic" and "be willing to adapt your plans." The most effective leaders are those who clearly set and manage expectations at the beginning of the trail with the knowledge that when folks are lost and bad weather hits, we have the highest performing team in place to reach the summit. So, set and manage expectations before the hike begins, lace up your boots, and get hiking up that mountain, together!

## August Discussion Activity

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Take a few moments on your own or with a colleague and evaluate a planning process you experienced. Then identify opportunities to translate or create those planning processes in your role, for your Team and/or in your Organization as you consider opportunities to set and manage expectations.

### ***Looking back:***

- Write down or share about a time when a plan was created, implemented and executed? What were the results?
- What challenges were encountered and how were they addressed?
- Share what opportunities were surfaced.
- How were expectations set and managed in the following areas:
  - Communication (Individual, Team, Organization)
  - Meetings (cadence, agendas, purpose, follow up)
  - Administration (document creation, scheduling, coordination)
  - Team Member Roles & Involvement (questionnaires, committees, etc.,)

### ***Looking forward:***

- With setting and managing expectations in mind, what do Individuals, Teams, and the Organization need, want or prefer right now?
- With setting and managing expectations in mind, what is healthy, helpful, and appropriate (HHA)?
- What skills and characteristics are critical for Team Members to develop and hone in for planning purposes? What do you need?



## September Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Fact Based Decision Making***

***“Just the facts ma'am”***

*As inspired by Sgt. Joe Friday, Dragnet*

As we prepare to enter the fourth quarter of 2022, we will be examining the 9<sup>th</sup> tenet of developing a leadership mindset, ***Fact-Based Decision Making***. If you are under the age of forty you may have to Google the opening quote inspired by the infamous Sgt. Joe Friday, an iconic character who will forever be remembered for his love of “sticking to the facts.”

We can, of course, argue philosophically that facts can be interpreted to mean anything you would like – and, of course, there is some truth to that perspective. However, for purposes of this developing a leadership mindset tenet, we are going to stick with a few basic assumptions about facts – oh the irony!

According to [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com), a fact (n.) can be defined as:

1. something that actually exists; reality; truth: *Your fears have no basis in fact.*
2. something known to exist or to have happened: *Space travel is now a fact.*
3. a truth known by actual experience or observation; something known to be true: *Scientists gather facts about plant growth.*
4. something said to be true or supposed to have happened: *The facts given by the witness are highly questionable.*

As leaders we make a myriad of decisions based on facts and feelings from moment to moment. Facts are not bad/negative, and feelings are not good/positive. Facts have a need to be assessed, evaluated, tested, and tried in order to be deemed true, just a fact.

The challenge leaders face in developing a leadership mindset around fact-based decision making is ensuring fact-based decisions are not an either/or transaction. When one takes a Sgt. Joe Friday “just the facts ma'am” approach, we discount, invalidate, and or disregard the feeling aspect of the decision-making equation.

Feeling *only* based decision making may be rooted in individual preferences, self-interest, self-preservation, fear, power, control, or uncertainty, the reasons are as many as there are individuals. Fact *only* based decision making can be skewed or misinterpreted, and or misrepresented by an individual. What is certain is individuals may use feelings to create ambiguity thus distorting facts. When facts are unclear or are miscast, clarity is obscured. Clarity is most certainly needed for wise decision-making.

Patrick Lencioni states in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, “ambiguity is the enemy of clarity.” Healthy teams set clear goals, objectives, action items and hold each other responsible for results and outcomes.

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Healthy leaders ensure teams are developed and prevent the fourth dysfunction of a team, the avoidance of accountability.

Leaders encourage individuals and teams to track, report, and analyze data in a manner that is healthy, helpful, and appropriate (H-H-A behavior as we fondly refer to it here at LSCA) and develop a team of people equipped to think critically, analyze information, and use facts to make decisions that ensure the long-term sustainability of an organization, therefore ensuring everyone feels good!

Several years ago, I encountered a highly emotionally charged, and costly feeling/fact-based decision-making situation. The General Manager of a production line was highly stressed about the number of orders their team members were receiving. They were adamant, extremely vocal, and frequently shared that the production team was ready to quit, completely over-worked and over-whelmed. The situation could absolutely not continue in its current trajectory.

I recall sitting down with the General Manager and asking questions about the production process, the daily and weekly quantity of orders, and the average units per hour a reasonable team member could be expected to produce. Without hesitation, the General Manager looked at me and asked, "Why is that information relevant? Everyone can see how stressed, overworked, and overwhelmed the team is! All you need to do is look around and see the looks on their faces and to hear their frustration in the break room to know we are going to have a mass exodus if this continues! I am telling you we need to hire *at least* three additional people!"

I agreed with the General Manager, sharing we most certainly do not wish to create anything less than an environment where each team member does not have the opportunity to enjoy a quality of work and a quality of life enabling them to be and become the most effective versions of themselves. We needed to act.

I proposed we survey the team, conduct a time study, collect data around the incoming order flow, measure the per hour demand on production, and tally the output results for a three-week period. I also asked the General Manager to research available information on industry norms regarding production expectations where safety and quality of work/quality of life with team members mattered.

Four weeks later we sat down together to review the results of the study. Here is what the facts indicated:

480 Total Minutes Available in an 8.0-hour Workday (allowing for a 1.0-hour lunch)

- 30 Two 15-minute Breaks
- 60 Minutes Work Area Prep Time
- 60 Minutes Administrative/Team/Company Training Time
- = 330 Production Capacity Minutes per Day

13.5 Average Number of Orders Received per Day per Team Member

- x 9 Average Number of Process Minutes Expected per Order
- = 121.5 Average Actual Daily Team Member Production Output

208.5 Available Minutes per Day per Team Member

*(Equivalent to 3.475 non-productive hours per day)*

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The facts demonstrated we clearly had production capacity and indicated we should conduct further gap analysis to get to the heart of the matter (a feeling), and that was a fact! In his iconic business best seller, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins encourages leaders to “confront the brutal facts” on “the way to continually refining the path to greatness.”

Healthy individuals and healthy teams have the awareness and capacity to use fact-based decision making as a tool. An indicator of an emotionally healthy, high functioning team is their use of data and metrics as a key component to creating clarity in the fact-based decision making process. Individuals and teams alike can weigh all facets of a situation without regard to opinions or emotions. Don't get me wrong, opinions and emotions clearly have value and matter, however without the facts, the chosen path may not be the wisest course of action.

When presented with fact-based information, team members with oppositional and or emotion-based decision-making tendencies will not be able to validate and ground their position and opinions. Fact-based decision making opens the door to greater levels of effective dialogue around problem solving and solution finding, as in the case of the General Manager.

I encourage you this season and onward to use facts not as weapons but as a finely tuned instrument to ensure the “way of wisdom” is aptly and ably pursued. We as leaders can perform the greatest service to our teams if we gather, assess, analyze, and share facts as a critical element to decision making. And those are the facts, ma'am!

-LS

## September Discussion Activity

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As 2022 winds down and 2023 gears up, begin the 2023 Road Mapping Process utilizing fact-based decision making.

We have three types of resources in this world: time, energy/labor, and money/capital. Using fact-based decision making is a resource allocation decision making responsibility of a leader.

A) List 5 key objectives you and your team hope to accomplish in 2023:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

B) Define the goals you wish to achieve for each objective.

C) Identify the evidence-based Key Performance Indicators needed to dispassionately gauge progress.

D) Create the appropriate Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly Dashboards needed to monitor outcomes and deliverables.

E) Develop action steps necessary to communicate, equip, train, encourage, and cheer progress as the team 'continually refines the path to greatness!'

## October Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Validate & Ground Assessments***

***“The essence of a cohesive leadership team is trust.”***

Patrick Lencioni, *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*

As we enter the final quarter of *Developing A Leadership Mindset*, we will be using Patrick Lencioni’s *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive* as our reading recommendation. Our tenth *Developing A Leadership Mindset* Tenet is Validating and Grounding Assessments.

Although you may not have the word executive in your title, you are indeed the “executive responsible for others” in your leadership role. Lencioni outlines the Four Obsessions as disciplines in his writing:

- #1. Build and maintain a cohesive leadership team
- #2. Create organizational clarity
- #3. Overcommunicate organizational clarity
- #4. Reinforce organizational clarity through human systems

Organizational health and an organization that is smart are both important according to Lencioni. So why do leaders tend to avoid the pursuit of organizational health? Perhaps it is because organizational health starts with the health of the leader themselves.

Lencioni sums it up this way:

*“But perhaps most important of all, organizational health is often neglected because it involves facing realities of human behavior that even the most committed executive is tempted to avoid. It requires levels of discipline and courage that only a truly extraordinary executive is willing to embrace.”*

Patrick Lencioni, *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*

If you lead others, you are operating in an “executive capacity.” You don’t need a Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, or any other Chief title to be the person responsible for leading those in your care.

Validating and grounding assessments are a critical component of creating organizational health, which is rooted in trust. I am convinced trust and caring are the foundation of all relationships. When trust is absent or there are low levels of trust in a relationship between a leader and another, it may be a result of the assumptions and assessments we have made about an individual, a team, or an organization.

When we miss validating and grounding our assessments, we approach any given situation and or communication transaction from an unbalanced, inaccurate standpoint or perspective. When our perspective is off from the very beginning of a communication engagement it is literally impossible to expect a positive and or productive intended/desired outcome.

If you find yourself in a situation where you do not trust a colleague on your Team, it is imperative you examine your leadership mindset. What assessments are you making and telling yourself about yourself and your colleague that are causing you to mistrust your team member?

As a leader, regardless of your position in your organization, you are a member of the leadership team by virtue of your presence on a team. Developing a healthy leadership mindset takes discipline and courage, as Lencioni notes, if we are to be healthy members of a team.

Many years ago, I had one of the first opportunities to learn and experience the validate and ground assessments lesson. I was invited to give a presentation to a business group in the mid-west region of the United States. As the participants gathered, I noticed a gentleman sitting in the front row, first seat on the aisle. He had a rather stern look on his face and seemed very intense.

As the presentation proceeded, he would alternatively lean forward with his hands on his knees and sit back with his arms folded across his barrel chest. My assumption was, “this guy hates what I’m sharing, hates my presentation style, is sorry he got stuck in the front row and for some unknown reason doesn’t like me and probably thinks this material is not helpful.”

I went into my Excellence In Speaking Institute newly trained mindset and spoke to the broad audience as much as possible while doing everything I could to not be distracted by the clearly unhappy gentleman in the front row.

At the end of the presentation, I was more than relieved to shuffle away with whatever bit of emotional energy I had left. I was furiously making mental notes on how I would try to do much better the next time and already contemplating all the ways I could have been more prepared, provided information with more gravitas, and left determined to work on my story telling and presentation skills.

As I tried to slink past the gentleman, he turned and grabbed my hands with his burly hands, looked me straight in the eyes and said, “that was the best presentation I’ve ever heard!” I was awash with confusion as I had spent a significant amount of time during my presentation making up my mind about what this gentleman was thinking, what he believed, and how unhappy and disengaged he apparently was the entire time he was present.

I recall to this day the blinding flash of humility and embarrassment I felt. I was humbled and embarrassed because I realized the amount of hubris it takes for one to take residence in the mind, heart, and soul of another human without regard to their personhood. Ouch. The biggest lesson wasn’t that I was thankfully more impactful as a presenter than I had thought. No, the biggest, most humbling lesson was I had mastered the ability to inaccurately think for another human.

We use our own personal lens, values, and beliefs in response to the actions of others when trying to validate and ground assessments – I call it the **projection factor** and find myself engaging in this practice frequently, in fact, daily. Ask yourself, what lens am I using to see this person and or situation that I may be projecting on another person?

Record the statements you make about yourself, and others, and become hyper aware of statements such as:

- “If that were me...”
- “You would think that someone would...”
- “Doesn’t everybody...”
- “I think the reason they...”

Recently, I came across four recommendations in an article by Dr. Caroline Leaf on “How to NOT take things personally,” which I think can help us avoid making inaccurate assessments:

1. Be careful of turning assumptions into facts. Rather, ask for clarification.
2. Be mindful of overthinking and have a plan in place to stop negative rumination, like temporary distraction or positive rumination.
3. Remember, other people’s opinions are based on their own experiences and perceptions, not yours.
4. At the end of the day, sometimes you will be a villain in someone else’s narrative, but you don’t have to commit to those who are committed to misunderstanding you. (Use grace and humility to move toward another person as you seek to build/re-build trust.)

An extraordinary human being used to share with me, “assume no ill intent” when thinking about others. It can be a humbling process but is and can be freeing to stop spending energy holding tightly to unhealthy beliefs, paradigms, and perspectives that take tremendous energy to self-validate. Shifting energy to engaging in a state of curiosity, possibilities thinking, and learning about others allows one to loosen their grip on self-focus and shift the leader’s mindset to a focus on others.

I once heard a speaker say, ‘do you realize, you talk to yourself more than any other person?’ We are constantly reinforcing our assessments about the motives and behaviors of others through the strongest lens on earth – our own lens. Three characteristics to practice are grace – for yourself and others, patience – for yourself and others, and the willingness to be humble.

Developing a leadership mindset and actively practicing validating and grounding assessments is daunting. The filters and framework with which we view others is deeply rooted in our values and beliefs. One of the greatest leadership challenges we have is with empathy and humility; developing the ability to maintain our values and beliefs while building trust with others.

If we want to be and become more effective as leaders, we must be obsessed with the desire to have the daily discipline and courage to validate and ground our assessments about ourselves and others if we truly want to live extraordinary lives.

## October Discussion Activity

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- Identify one person you are challenged to trust:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Record the reasons you do not trust this person:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- What assessments are you making about this individual's behavior:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- What are three to five alternative reasons this individual may be behaving in this manner:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Ask yourself if you have any type of bias regarding this individual:
  - Gender bias
  - Unconscious bias
  - Cultural bias
  - Political bias
  - Lifestyle choice bias
  - Age bias
  - Education/training bias
  - Socio/economic bias
  
- What steps could you take to validate and ground the assessments you are making about this individual?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_



## November Edition of Tool of the Month

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### ***Finding Common Ground & Shared Passion***

**“Quite simply, cohesiveness at the executive level is the single greatest indicator of future success that any organization can achieve.”**

Patrick Lencioni, *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*

As we arrive at the 11<sup>th</sup> of the 12 tenets of *Developing a Leadership Mindset*, Find Common Ground and Shared Passion, it is fitting we are approaching a season of gratitude. If we are to succeed as cohesive individuals, teams, leaders, and as a nation, an “attitude of gratitude” is essential as my late uncle Charlie “Tremendous” Jones liked to say. Leaders who are grateful recognize their mantle of leadership is a calling, a privilege, and a sacred trust.

The most effective leaders, by whose results I have been most impacted, are hands down the most grateful and most humble humans. Humility, I believe, is rooted in an attitude of gratitude and I have had the privilege of working with many extraordinary, humble leaders over the years but three rise to the top as I consider who most exemplifies a heart of gratitude and a spirit of humility; they are a Chief Financial Officer, a former Senator, and my Spiritual Mentor and Leader of more than 20 years.

If leaders truly care about the current and future success of their organization, they will humbly find common ground and shared passion. The highest form of leadership is developing the ability to focus on the greater good of the group and to focus on others. Healthy leaders humbly and dispassionately seek to understand their colleagues enroute to finding common ground and developing shared passion.

Leadership teams that experience a lack of cohesion suffer from a lack of organizational health, as well as poor performance and productivity. Building and maintaining a cohesive leadership team is Discipline #1 in Patrick Lencioni’s *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*, the book we are focusing on the final quarter of 2022. One of the critical ways to develop a cohesive leadership team is to connect around common ground and shared passion.

Cohesiveness does not equate to a lack of conflict, or disagreement, quite the contrary. Healthy teams engage in passionate debate, even heated exchange, on the way to finding common ground and shared passion. It is challenging to achieve leadership team cohesion if everyone on the team is not committed to finding common ground and shared passion.

It takes an extraordinary focus on others to find common ground and to create an environment where everyone cares about shared passion above self-interest. Common gaps we have found in achieving common ground and shared passion may occur when:

- decision making and behavioral boundaries for each individual and the collective group have not been identified and clearly articulated

- individual leadership philosophies and styles differ
- leaders have differing levels of emotional needs
- there are differing levels of self-awareness and self-management
- values and beliefs differ
- some individuals engage in possibilities thinking while others have a limited versus growth mindset
- differing levels of resourcefulness, risk taking, and/or tolerance for ambiguity
- pessimism versus optimism approach to interactions and the gap between both approaches and an inability to understand and value the approach of the other individual's paradigm

As you consider how to build a cohesive leadership team it will require each leader to develop a deep understanding of themselves, and co-leaders must spend the requisite time getting to know their fellow leaders in transparent and authentic ways.

Building trust and caring, the foundation of all relationships, will ultimately result in cohesiveness. We must care enough about achieving cohesiveness that we are willing to invest in achieving common ground rooted in transparency, authenticity, and emotional maturity.

Lencioni recommends spending time reviewing personal histories together. He states, "although it may sound like a 'touchy-feely' exercise, I have found that it is remarkably helpful for members of a leadership team to spend time talking about their backgrounds."

- Create a regular forum for transparent and authentic dialogue. Spend time in social settings and activities that form common bonds.
- Invite each member of the leadership team to provide others with a copy of their resume or CV and walk them through their life, vocational, and education experiences as a platform for discovering shared passion.
- Spend time with each member of your leadership team developing self-awareness by using helpful tools such as a DiSC Profile, Change Ready Profile, and CliftonStrengths tools. Learn to know, understand, and value each member of the leadership team.
- Compare and contrast styles, talents, and strengths recognizing we all do the same things for different reasons.

As long as we focus on shared passion and find common ground, differences can be diminished and those we lead will benefit. In every meeting, every communication interaction, every decision, every plan operating out of common ground and shared passion provides a framework for what we fondly refer to as H.H.A. (Healthy, Helpful, Appropriate) engagement.

When President Joe Biden and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden arrived in Hurricane Ian devastated Florida, President Biden stated, "this is the United States of America and I emphasize, United States." Later he added "we're all in this together."

Governor Ron DeSantis responded by expressing gratitude and the President and Governor found common ground around their shared passion, stating, "We appreciate working together across various levels of government." Regardless of political party, beliefs or affiliation, extraordinary leadership is unequivocally taking the high road.

If we want to build cohesive teams, it begins at the highest levels of responsibility in organizations. Each leader in the transaction must work to develop emotional intelligence, identify their own emotional needs, and engage from a place of emotional maturity if we are to find common ground and shared passion.

Patrick Lencioni reiterates in his epilogue, "In terms of the effectiveness of a particular team, my experience indicates that a group's cohesiveness has far more impact on success than its collective level of experience or knowledge." Create the common ground at the organizational level and develop a cohesive leadership team by sharing the passion for the individual and organizational health of others.

Leaders taking the high road, exhibiting humility and an attitude of gratitude, and striving for the common good are all around us. Make the conscious choice to be the one that finds common ground and shared passion, one who will be remembered for building cohesiveness and their extraordinary leadership effectiveness.

## November Discussion Activity

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- Identify one person on your leadership team you need to connect with:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Record 5-10 personal details you know about their story:
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
  4. \_\_\_\_\_
  5. \_\_\_\_\_
  6. \_\_\_\_\_
  7. \_\_\_\_\_
  8. \_\_\_\_\_
  9. \_\_\_\_\_
  10. \_\_\_\_\_
  
- What are your colleagues reading, hobbies, travel preferences?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- What strengths does your colleague bring to your Team:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Identify one action you can/will take in the next twelve months to personally connect with and or engage with your colleague:
  - Q1 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Q2 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Q3 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Q4 \_\_\_\_\_
  
- What steps could you take to find common ground with your colleague?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_