CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PEOPLE LEADERS
Enhancing Interpersonal and Soft Skills

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No Leader is Perfect

Becoming a better leader requires humility, an open mind, and a lifelong commitment to learning, practicing, and refining new skills.

As leaders you need to embrace continuous growth and improvement to lead effectively throughout your career.

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Setting the Stage

- Participate and Ask Questions
- Respect, Courtesy and Empathy
- Cell Phones
- Break
- Questions

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Agenda

- Evolving Thoughts on Leadership
- Soft Skills
- Emotional Intelligence
- Employee Engagement
- Psychological Safety
- Self-Aware Leadership
- Effective Leadership Communication
- Stress & Leadership

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Introductions

1. **Pair up**
2. **Ask your partner the following**

- What is your leadership superpower?
- What is your leadership kryptonite
- Introduce your partner to the group

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Setting the Stage

Evolving Thoughts on Leadership

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Are You a Leader?

Dying for a Paycheck
By Jeffrey Pfeffer (2018)

- Soft skills are not just "nice to have" but essential for effective leadership.
- Cultivating soft skills helps leaders prioritize employee well-being, ensuring sustainable success.
- Leaders have a greater impact on employee health and wellbeing than their GP.
- Employees are literally putting their wellbeing in your hands.

What are the qualities of an effective leader?

The Trust Triangle of Leadership

Francis Frei Trust Triangle

AUTHENTICITY

TRUST

LOGIC   EMPATHY

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Let's talk about Mike

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Evolving Perspectives on Leadership

IQ + EQ = SUCCESS

- Use of authority to **control**, give orders, enforce **compliance**, or use charismatic personalities to **manipulate** others into conforming (Newman, 2007)
- IQ and technical skills are important threshold capabilities. They are **entry level capabilities** for senior leadership (Goleman, 2015)

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"What got you here won't get your there"

Goldsmith, 2007

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Are Soft Skills "Soft"?

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Small Group Discussion

When you hear the term "**Soft Skills**" what do you think of?

What about "**Hard Skills**"?

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Rethinking Soft Skills
A CORE COMPETENCY

EXAMPLES	COMMON PERCEPTION	VISUAL MISCONCEPTION
• Empathy • Resilience • Compassion • Adaptability	• "Soft" suggests agreeable, easy, weak	• "Hard" technical skills seen as more valuable • Technical and quantifiable • Undervalues the importance of interpersonal skills in character and leadership

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Core Leadership Skill

Soft skills are essential for leaders to create an environment where teams can thrive and achieve their goals.

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Slide 18

Large Group Discussion

Why do leaders at junior, middle, and senior levels struggle with soft skills?

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Why Leaders Struggle with Soft Skills

JUNIOR	MID-LEVEL	SENIORS
• Lack of experience	• Increased Responsibilities	• High Pressure and Stress
• Insufficient Training	• Entrenched Habits	• Overreliance on Authority
• High Pressure to Perform	• Organizational Culture	• Lack of Continuous Development
• Self-Doubt	• Limited Self-Awareness	• Entrenched Leadership Styles
• Limited Emotional Intelligence	• Feedback Resistance	• Isolation
• Feedback Aversion	• Stress and Burnout	• Feedback Aversion

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Soft Skills and Emotional Intelligence

• Emotional intelligence (EQ) underpins key leadership soft skills like communication, conflict resolution, adaptability, and team building

• Leaders with high EQ better understand and manage emotions, fostering stronger relationships and more productive teams

• Enhancing EQ leads to more effective and compassionate leadership

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What is Emotional Intelligence?

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Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Defined

The **awareness** that emotions can drive our behavior and impact people (positively and negatively). **Learning** how to **manage** those emotions – both our own and others' – especially when we are under **pressure**.

(Connors, 2020)

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> **Emotional intelligence is not the opposite of intelligence; it is not the triumph of heart over head — it is the unique intersection of both."**

DAVID CARUSO

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Consequence of Low EQ

- 75% of derailed leadership careers due to lacking **emotional competencies**
- **Inability** to handle interpersonal problems
- Unsatisfactory team leadership during times of **difficulty or conflict**
- Inability to **adapt** to change
- Inability to elicit **trust**

The Centre for Creative Leadership

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Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

- Concept of EQ around for 30+ years with significant supporting research
- No significant gender differences
- A skill set that can be developed and improved over time
- Significant age-related differences, peaking at age 50

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" **A leader's intelligence has to have a strong emotional component**

Jack Welch

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Large Group Discussion

What role do emotions play in leadership?

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Successful Leaders Understand Emotions

Emotions are:

- Universal yet personal
- Grounded in senses, physiology, and cognitions
- Shape behaviors, relationships, decisions, and economy
- Determine whether people buy from you, invest in you, and work with you

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The 5 Components of EQ

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social Skills

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The Importance of EQ

"
The more senior a position in an organization, the more EQ matters

Daniel Goleman

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Benefits of EQ in the Workplace

Effective leadership

Better communication

Greater authenticity

Increased trust and empathy

Stronger relationships

Improved conflict resolution

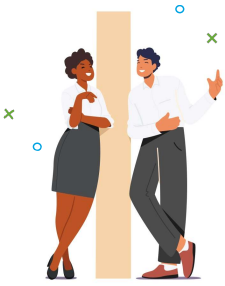Increased job satisfaction

Civility, respect, and psychological safety

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Characteristics of High EQ Leaders

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Empathy
- Motivation
- Active Listening

- Strong Interpersonal Skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Adaptability
- Feedback Reception
- Inspirational Leadership

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Developing EQ Skills

- Self-Reflection
- Practice Active Listening
- Pause Before Responding
- Develop Empathy
- Manage Stress
- Seek Feedback

- Practice Responding Ins of Reacting
- Improve Non-Verbal Communication
- Read Emotionally Focus Books
- Seek Professional Guida

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The Leadership Challenge

- Employees tend to **leave** their managers rather than their jobs
- EQ is the **foundation of all effective leadership behaviours** required for success
- Shifts focus from a leadership power hierarchy to a **leadership competence** hierarchy

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Employee Engagement

"The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers."

RALPH NADER

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Large Group Discussion

What is Employee Engagement?

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Employee Engagement

Is the enthusiasm and commitment an employee feels toward their job and company, driving their contribution to organizational success and well-being.

"Engaged Employees are psychological *owners*, drive performance and innovation, and move the organization forward".

(Gallup, 2017)

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The Engaged Organization

- People grasp the big picture and aligned around common purpose
- Accountability is fully distributed
- People understand the whole system
- Performance gaps are quickly identified and resolved
- Creativity is sparked from all levels to contribute best ideas
- Capacity for future changes increases

R. H. Axelrod, 2000

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The Engaged Employee

- Commitment to Organizational Goals
- High Levels of Productivity
- Strong Sense of Belonging
- Proactive and Initiative-Taking
- Positive Attitude
- Willingness to Collaborate
- Effective Communication
- Continuous Improvement

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Managers Account for at Least 70% of the Variance in Employee Engagement

Canadian employee engagement is

21 % vs 35% in US

Gallup 2022

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Small Group Discussion

What Factors Erode Employee Engagement?

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Factors that Erode Employee Engagement

- Lack of Recognition
- Poor Leadership
- Lack of Career Development
- Inadequate Compensation
- Poor Work-Life Balance
- Lack of Autonomy
- Toxic Work Environment
- Unclear Expectations

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"[A] main cause of turnover is lack of leadership and poor company culture.

Leaders need to find better ways to engage their employees.

There are so many factors other than compensation that lead to good company cultures."

Goldsmith, 2007

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As a Leader the Engagement of Your Team is in Your Hands

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Factors that Promote Employee Engagement

- Trustworthy & Authentic
- Ethics & Integrity
- Emotionally Intelligent
- Responsible & Accountable
- Coach, Develop, Support & Mentor
- Collaborative & Inclusive
- Available & Visible
- Inspiring

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Slide 46

> **Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers."**
>
> STEPHEN R. CONVEY

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Slide 47

Psychological Safety

Creating a Workplace Culture that is the Foundation of High Performance

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Slide 48

Large Group Discussion

What is Psychological Safety?

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Psychological Safety At Work

- Employees **encouraged to share** ideas and suggestions for process improvement. Ideas actively **considered and implemented** where possible.

- Open communication between team members and management, with regular opportunities for **feedback and discussion**.

- Employees can **freely express** opinions, ideas and concerns **without fear** of negative consequences.

- Employees feel **comfortable speaking up** about safety hazards or concerns without fear of retribution

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4 Types of Psychological Safety

INCLUSION SAFETY

LEARNER SAFETY

CONTRIBUTOR SAFETY
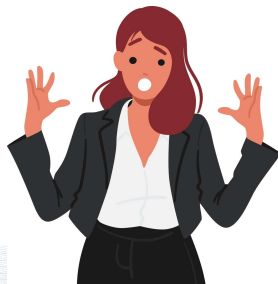
CHALLENGER SAFETY

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Culture of Fear

Constant fear of being yelled at:

- For making mistakes
- Not knowing things
- Challenging Authority

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"Fear Rigidity"

Excessive Stress Impacts Pre-Frontal Cortex

- Tendency to Narrow Focus Under Threat
- Impairment in Executive Functioning
  - Judgement
  - Memory
  - Impulse Control
- Reduces ability to focus on performance

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Poor Company Culture

=

Higher Costs & Lower Profit

THE HARRIS POLL 2022

35% increase in employee **turnover in 2022**, up from the 24% in 2021

Turnover **costs an average of $41K** each year

16% of hiring managers reporting costs of **$100,000 or more** annually in turnover

64% of companies find turnover places a **heavy burden on existing employees**

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Psychological Safety is Good for Business

1 **Positively** related to employee **creativity** and i**nnovation**
(Jiang & Probst, 2018)

2 High levels of psychological safety outperform their peers
(Brown, 2018)

3 **Reduced** employee **emotional exhaustion**, which can lead to burnout, turnover and injury
(Jiang & Probst, 2018)

4 Related to **positive** team learning behaviors, greater team **performance**, and reduced team conflict
(Newman, Donohue, & Eva, 2018)

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"**Psychological safety is not about being nice.**"

AMY EDMONDSON

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Nice vs Effective

BEING A NICE BOSS

- Prioritizes Comfort
- Focuses on Agreeableness
- Avoids Being Direct
- Avoids Confrontation
- Creates Exceptions
- May lead to Entitlement

BEING AN EFFECTIVE BOSS

- Prioritizes Results and Growth
- Balances Relationships with Accountability
- Direct & Respectful
- Embraces Constructive Conflict
- Adapts and Evolves
- Leads with Emotional Intelligence

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Self-Aware Leadership

Leader Yourself to Lead Others

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THE SELF-AWARE LEADER

- The best leadership style is embodied by the self-aware leader.
- Self-awareness is crucial for personal growth and effective leadership.

WHAT IS SELF-AWARENESS

- Understanding one's own strengths, weaknesses, emotions, and impact on others.
- Continuous self-reflection and openness to feedback.

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Benefits of **Self-Awareness** in Leadership

- Enhanced Decision-Making
- Improved Emotional Intelligence
- Stronger Relationships
- Increased Adaptability
- Enhanced Accountability
- Fostering Trust and Respect
- Driving Team Performance

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Leadership Style:

No One-Size-Fits-All

No Superior Style

- Each style has its strengths and weaknesses.
- Effectiveness depends on the context and specific circumstances.

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Leadership Style
Pros and Cons

AUTOCRATIC	DEMOCRATIC	TRANSFORMATIONAL
Effective in crisis situations requiring quick decisions	Best for environments that benefit from team input and collaboration	Ideal for driving change and innovation
CON	**CON**	**CON**
Can lead to employee dissatisfaction and reduced morale due to lack of input and autonomy.	Decision-making process can be slow and cumbersome, potentially delaying important actions	May lead to burnout if employees are continuously pushed towards high levels of change and innovation without adequate support.

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Leadership Style
Pros and Cons

TRANSACTIONAL	LAISSEZ-FAIRE	SERVANT LEADERSHIP
Works well for routine tasks and maintaining stability	Suitable for highly skilled and self-motivated teams	Promotes a culture of trust and support
CON	**CON**	**CON**
Can stifle creativity and initiative, as it focuses on established procedures and rewards compliance	Can result in a lack of direction and oversight, potentially leading to poor performance or disorganization	May be perceived as weak or overly lenient, potentially leading to difficulties in enforcing discipline and maintaining authority

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Common Ways of Interacting with Others

- Aggressive
- Passive
- Passive-Aggressive
- Assertive

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Small Group Activity

Each group describes one of the following

(AGGRESSIVE) (PASSIVE)

(PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE) (ASSERTIVE)

- Describe the impact on leadership
- Report back to the group

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GROUP 1

Aggressive Behaviour

Impact on leadership

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Aggressive Behavior

DESCRIPTION

Dominating and violating the rights of others

CHARACTERISTICS

- Speaking in a loud or overbearing tone
- Using threats, insults, or demeaning language
- Prioritizing one's own needs over others, often at the other person's expense
- Physical manifestations like invading personal space or using threatening gestures

GOAL

To win or dominate, often at the expense of others

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Impact of Aggressive Leaders

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN
Causes fear and withholding of information

CONFLICT ESCALATION
Exacerbates tensions, creating a hostile environment

DECREASED MORALE
Lowers motivation and engagement

REDUCED COLLABORATION
Stifles creativity and teamwork.

HIGH TURNOVER
Drives employees to leave, increasing costs

EROSION OF TRUST
Damages credibility and effectiveness.

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GROUP 2
Passive Behaviour
Impact on leadership

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Passive Behavior

DESCRIPTION
Allowing others to violate one's rights, often to avoid conflict

CHARACTERISTICS
- Avoiding expressing feelings, needs, or opinions
- Allowing others to make decisions for them
- Often sacrificing one's own needs for sake of others
- Might feel resentful or helpless as a result

GOAL
To avoid confrontation or displeasure, often at the expense of one's own needs.

DON'T HEAR

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Impact of Passive Leaders

LACK OF DIRECTION
Leaves employees uncertain about roles and goals

INEFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING
Avoids critical decisions, causing delays

WEAK CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
Allows conflicts to persist, harming team dynamics

DECREASED ACCOUNTABILTY
Fails to hold employees accountable, reducing productivity

LOW MORALE
Results in low motivation and engagement

DIMISHED RESPECT
Perceived lack of authority and confidence

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GROUP 3
Passive-Aggressive Behaviour
Impact on leadership

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Passive-Aggressive Behavior
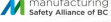
DESCRIPTION
Expressing negative feelings or resentment indirectly

CHARACTERISTICS
- Avoiding direct confrontation but showing displeasure through subtle means
- Making sarcastic comments, giving the silent treatment, or using subtle sabotage
- Often characterized by procrastination or internal mistakes in response to others' demands
- Expressing hostility indirectly, like through backhanded compliments

GOAL
To express displeasure or anger without confronting the issue directly, often leading to more confusion or conflict in the long run

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Impact of Passive-Aggressive Leaders

INDIRECT COMMUNICATION
Causes confusion and misunderstandings

AVOIDANCE OF ISSUES
Prevents conflict resolution and problem-solving

EROSION OF TRUST
Perceived as insincere or manipulative

HINDERED COLLABORATION
Discourages open communication and teamwork

REDUCED MORALE
Creates a toxic work environment

INEFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP
Limits ability to inspire and motivate

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GROUP 4

Assertive Behaviour

Impact on leadership

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Assertive Behavior

DESCRIPTION
Standing up for one's own rights while respecting the rights of others

CHARACTERISTICS
- Speaking clearly and directly
- Using "I" statements to express feelings and needs
- Actively listening and seeking mutual understanding
- Respecting both one's own boundaries and those of others

GOAL
To communicate effectively and reach a mutually beneficial outcome

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Impact of Assertive Leaders

CLEAR COMMUNICATION
Reduces misunderstandings and fosters transparency

EMPOWERMENT
Promotes collaboration and innovation

CONFIDENCE
Earns respect and inspires team confidence

BOUNDARY SETTING
Ensures a respectful, productive environment

CONFLICT RESOLUTION
Directly and calmly addresses issues

DECISION MAKING
Balances assertiveness with empathy for fair outcomes

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Becoming a More Assertive People Leader

- Know Your Boundaries
- Communicate Clearly
- Demonstrate Confidence
- Stay Calm and Composed
- Use "I" Statements
- Listen to Understand
- Prepare and Rehearse
- Seek Feedback

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Effective Leadership Communication

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Group Discussion

Why is it important for leaders to provide direct but respectful feedback to employees?

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Importance of Respectful and Direct Communication

- Builds Trust and Respect
- Enhances Clarity and Understanding
- Encourages Open Dialogue
- Maintains Morale and Motivation
- Promotes Accountability and Performance
- Reduces Conflict and Tension
- Supports Professional Development
- Demonstrates Leadership Competence

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Providing Feedback

- Crucial role in a healthy workplace
- Key Leadership responsibility
- Vital tool for team members' improvement
- Promotes individual career advancement
- Enhances overall team performance
- Inappropriate feedback approaches can:
- Be perceived as unjust or inaccurate
- Result in mistrust and bitterness

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Providing Feedback

- Can be both positive ("great work, please do more") and negative ("please stop, do this instead")
- Feedback is often wrongly equated with negativity
- Positive feedback is remarkably effective
- Effective feedback typically follows a 5:1 positive to negative ratio
- Feedback effectiveness varies with communication style and individual preferences

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Discussing Employee Performance Can Be Uncomfortable

- Fear of Negative Reactions
- Lack of Training
- Time Constraints
- Uncertainty on How to Frame Feedback
- Personal Discomfort
- Fear of Damaging Relationships

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SBI Model (Extended Feedback)

S — SITUATION
B — BEHAVIOUR
I — IMPACT

- Clear, specific, and actionable feedback.
- Describes context, behavior, and impact.

- Objective and fact-based.
- Includes improvement suggestions or positive reinforcement.

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SBI Model (Extended Feedback)

ALTERNATE BEHAVIOUR

"I would appreciate it if, during future presentations, all of us could keep our phones aside and hold off on side conversations until there's a break or the end of the meeting."

ALTERNATE IMPACT

"This would not only show respect to the person presenting but also ensure that everyone is on the same page, which would lead to more productive discussions and a cohesive team environment."

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Performance Feedback Steps

Talking to an employee about performance issues requires a balance of respect and directness.

The following is a step-by-step guide on how to approach this conversation effectively.

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Preparation

GATHER FACTS

Document specific examples of performance issues, including dates, behaviors, and outcomes. Ensure you have a clear understanding of the problem.

SET OBJECTIVES

Determine what you want to achieve from the conversation, such as improved performance, a development plan, or mutual understanding.

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Starting the Conversation

CHOOSE A PRIVATE SETTING

Find a private, quiet place where you can talk without interruptions. Ensure you have enough time for a thorough discussion.

BEGIN WITH POSITIVES

Start the conversation by acknowledging the employee's strengths and contributions.

Example: "Hi [Employee's Name], I appreciate the effort you put into [specific task or project]. Your dedication to [specific strength] is valuable to our team."

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Addressing Performance Issues

STATE THE CONCERN CLEARLY AND RESPECTFULLY

Explain the specific performance issues in a calm and factual manner.

Example: "However, I've noticed that there have been some concerns regarding [specific performance issue]. For instance, [provide specific examples]."

EXPLAIN THE IMPACT

Describe how the performance issues affect the team, project, or organization.

Example: "This has impacted our team by [explain the impact], and it's important that we address this to maintain our productivity and team morale."

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Listening and Understanding

ASK FOR THEIR PERSPECTIVE

Give the employee an opportunity to explain their side of the story and any challenges they might be facing

Example: "Can you help me understand what might be contributing to these issues? Are there any challenges you're facing that I may not be aware of?" **Duty to Inquire**

SHOW EMPATHY

Acknowledge their feelings and any difficulties they mention.

Example: "I understand that [acknowledge their feelings or challenges], and I want to work together to find a solution."

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Developing a Plan

SET EXPECTATIONS

Clearly outline what is expected moving forward and the standards that need to be met.

Example: "Moving forward, it's important that [specific expectation]. This means [detailed expectation or goal]."

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Offer Support and Resources

PROVIDE SUPPORT

Provide any necessary support, resources, or training that can help them improve

Example: "I'm here to support you. Would additional training or resources in [specific area] be helpful? Let's work together to ensure you have what you need to succeed."

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Agree on a Plan

DEVELOP PLAN

Develop a concrete plan with specific, measurable goals and a timeline for improvement.

Example: "Let's set some specific goals to work towards. By [specific date], I'd like to see [specific improvement]. We can check in regularly to track your progress."

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Closing the Conversation

END ON A POSITIVE NOTE

Reaffirm your belief in their ability to improve and your commitment to supporting them.

Example: "I believe in your ability to improve and I'm here to support you. Thank you for taking the time to discuss this with me."

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Document Meeting Notes

TAKE NOTES

Record key points and decisions made during the meeting to ensure clarity and accountability.

Example: "I will document the main points we've discussed today and the actions we've agreed upon and send you a copy. Let me know you've received and if you agree to the items discussed. This will help us keep track of progress and make sure we're both clear on the next steps. "

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Role Play

Let's practice what we learned!

- In groups of 3, each person takes the turn of the leader practicing the skill, the employee being provided feedback, and the observer.
- Each person chooses one of the scenarios requiring effective communication.
- Each turn is 15 minutes (10 min to practice and 5 min to debrief)
- For each debrief discuss what went well, what to try different next time.

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CASE SCENARIO #1

Addressing Poor Quality Work

Feedback Challenge:

John has been submitting work that consistently lacks detail and accuracy.

Emma has observed that John, a valued team member, has been producing work that consistently falls below expected quality standards, with numerous errors and insufficient thoroughness. This issue is causing delays in project timelines and negatively impacting the team's efficiency. Emma feels the urgency to address this problem promptly, as it affects both productivity and the department's reputation. She needs to understand the reasons behind John's declining performance and is mindful of addressing the issue without demotivating him or creating tension within the team.

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CASE SCENARIO #2

Addressing Negative Customer Reviews

Feedback Challenge:

Jane has received several negative customer reviews.

Narrative:

Lucas has recently noticed that Jane, a team member at the call center, has been receiving negative customer feedback for unprofessionalism, lack of empathy, and inadequate issue resolution. These reviews are tarnishing the call center's reputation and raising concerns among the management team. Lucas must address these performance issues with Jane, understand the root causes, and support her in improving her customer interactions while maintaining team morale and ensuring customer satisfaction

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CASE SCENARIO #3

Addressing Disruptive Behavior in Team Meetings

Feedback Challenge:

Mark frequently disrupts during team meetings.

Narrative:

Sophie has noticed that Mark, a key member of her project team, is consistently disruptive during meetings by interrupting colleagues, making off-topic comments, and showing a lack of respect for others' contributions. This behavior is causing frustration among team members and hindering meeting productivity and effectiveness. Sophie needs to address Mark's behavior constructively, understand any underlying issues, and guide him to align with the team's expectations for professional conduct during meetings, without alienating him or creating further tension within the team.

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Role Play Group Debrief

- What went well?
- What was challenging?
- What to try different next time?
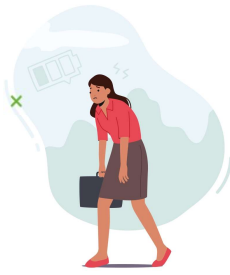
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Success Sightings

Don't just pay attention to behavior that requires change, be on the lookout for employees performing well and let them know!

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Stress & Leadership

We are not our best when we feel our worst.

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Small Group Discussion

How does stress impact our leadership behaviour?

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Negative Impact of Stress Acts

| REDUCED SELF-AWARENESS | IMPAIRED SELF-REGULATION | DECREASED EMPATHY | COMPROMISED SOCIAL SKILLS | DIFFICULTY IN MOTIVATION | POOR DECISION-MAKING |

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"We are **dangerous** when we are not **conscious** of our **responsibility** for how we behave, think, and feel.

MARSHALL B. ROSENBERG

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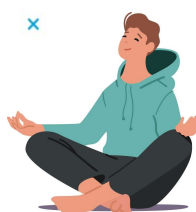
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Tips on Managing Stress

- Practice Mindfulness
- Maintain Work-Life Balance
- Delegate Tasks
- Exercise Regularly
- Seek Mentorship
- Prioritize Sleep
- Healthy Eating
- Time Management
- Take Breaks
- Develop a Supportive Network

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"The leaders who get the most out of their people are the leaders who care the most about their people".

SIMON SINEK

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Summary

- Leadership soft skills are a core competency
- Technical skills are an entry level ability, EQ is required for effective leadership
- Leaders drive employee engagement
- Psychological safety improves culture and performance
- Effective feedback and communication are a core leadership responsibility
- Stress must be managed
- Soft skills can be learned and enhanced!

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Questions

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Thank You

Dr. Steve Conway
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