

## You Aren't Psychic, Stop Leading As If You Were!

### If You Don't Ask The Right Questions, You Can't Get The Right Answers

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The arena of entertainment is filled with characters purporting to be gifted with psychic abilities. The list includes such notables as Ms. Cleo, John Edwards, Silvia Browne, The Great Karnac, and the like. While some individuals may have a heightened sixth sense, most leaders do not. That is, most leaders don't when it comes to reading the minds of their direct reports.

Your direct reports need a leader who is willing to engage them at a personal and intimate level in order to design Individual Development Plans (IDP's) or Performance Enhancement Plans (PEP's) that really work. Such plans require input and insight that is unique to the individual contributor. Of course, that makes sense, but much too often, leaders are drafting these plans in a virtual vacuum, and are perplexed as to why the plans are ineffective.

The mistakes start with the misconception that a leader needs to treat all his or her direct reports the same. Such a conclusion, in effect, negates the "individual" in the title of the Individual Development Plan. Many of us, particularly the Baby Boomer generation, were indoctrinated to the aged and flawed philosophy, "If you're not going to do it for everyone, don't do it for anyone." There may have been a time when that approach was effective, but in today's multi-cultural, multi-national, mixed-gender enterprises, that philosophy is irresponsible and incapacitating.

A leader cannot address the skill outages of his or her team members by simply "guessing" what might work best. The effective leader knows he or she must solicit the individual needs of each team member. Specifically, the leader must solicit what the team member needs from the leader to achieve the non-negotiable outcomes. The secret is never to compromise the deliverables, but to evaluate and adjust the approach as needed. In absence of a candid and intimate conversation, the leader is left to rely only on his or her psychic ability. Needless to say, that for most of us, that is neither a strong nor a preferred fallback position.

How often are you asking, "What obstacles or distractions are you experiencing that may impact your ability to make your maximum contribution to our goals and outcomes?" The answer to this question will give you the insight you need to tailor the IDP to the specific needs of that individual contributor. The leader who chooses not to ask this insightful question is, in effect, leading in the dark. Said differently, those leaders are relying on their dim psychic ability to light the way to enhanced performance and maximum contribution.

As the great psychics know, the best way to build credibility is to allow the guest or client to share info or data, and then build on what is shared. Leaders who appear to possess "magical abilities" to motivate and direct, aren't psychic, but they routinely gather key pieces of info and data, then leverage those insights.

**Leadership Lesson:** You are not psychic! Asking the right questions will give you key insights into becoming the most effective leader you can possibly become. However, it will require that you replace your reliance on your psychic skills with the development of your relationship building skills. Exploring the unperceived, even imperceptible, obstacles experienced by your direct reports will position you to eliminate distractions - as you elevate productivity.

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