4 Important Leadership Conversations

by Irene Becker, www.justcoachit.com | 3Q Leadership Blog
The leader who communicates well succeeds well.

Building successful relationships grow in importance at every step of your career, it is particularly critical when going through a transformation, and in stepping into your change agent shoes and helping to build a leadership culture.

It is important to invest time in conversations with team members, your leaders, peers, and other stakeholders. 21st C success demands greater connection, alignment, and collaboration with others. Every exchange is a touchpoint, an opportunity to learn, share, encourage creativity, build trust and truly honest dialogue.

In their book, Leadership Conversations, Alan S. Berson and Richard G. Stieglitz describe four important types of

leadership conversations; those that build relationships, develop others, help in decision making and lead to execution.

1. "Conversations to build relationships"

The more
relationships — and relationship conversations — you have, the more you'll know
whom to trust for the right perspectives on problems or opportunities.

You'll also learn how to complement your strengths with others' abilities. As you talk, ask questions, seek common understandings and listen carefully. Don't use texts or emails to deal with challenging or difficult problems. The phone is better, and face-to-face conversations are the best. Be respectful and seek to engage and inspire others as you build relationships.

Remember that
people look to you constantly. Avoid bringing negative moods to work, since
your silence and your body language also send messages. Keep your mind open to
different and opposing views. Value diverse views, especially from those
closest to you. Do not react to what is
being said to you, pause and respond; yes, you can train yourself to pause and
to refocus on your objective and the mutual objective of your conversation. I call this skill,
constructive discontent-a critical EQ & 3Q leadership skill.

 2. **"Conversations to develop others"** — As you
progress up the leadership ladder, increase your investment in developing other
people. To succeed as a leader, you must have followers. Invest in them,

develop them, recognize them and gain their loyalty.

To be promotable,
you need successors. Bring them along with coaching, allow them to do what they
do best as often as possible and give them the tools they need.

Provide formal and informal feedback regularly. Be open and direct. Learn how to give thoughtful, constructive criticism in a way that transforms what you are saying into a growth opportunity.

Ask for feedback, open the door for your team members to let you know if there is something you can do to support their work.

Consistently recognize big and small achievements. Even putting a post-it note on a screen saying, "Good Job" has been known to have an important effect. Positive feedback makes our body secret the happy hormone, dopamine which also helps us remember the positive incident.

Craft all of your feedback to help recipients achieve their goals.

Finding mentors who will coach team members can be a robust success tool.

3. "Conversations to make decisions" – You will rarely have enough time and information or the right conditions to make decisions in an ideal context. Leaders make better decisions when they can draw on multiple perspectives and gain as much data as possible to aid their judgment.

Set up talks to
gather data, determine your options and gain broad buy-in for decisions.

Remain open to building consensus around a compromise. Instead

of concentrating on problems, set a conversation's tone by asking probing questions that open possibilities and empower everyone in the group.

4. "Conversations to take action" – Prior discussions create optimal conditions for action, but action requires additional dialogues. Use conversations to plan your actions. In the process, you'll develop ideas and build concurrence.

> *"Managers usually answer questions, great leaders routinely ask them." Alan S. Berson and Richard G. Stieglitz*

Circumstances will
likely alter your plans, so prepare your team for change. Don't act based on
assumptions. Ask questions, gather data, and craft your plans and actions
accordingly. Make requests of people; don't give them orders. Soon after you
act, use an "after-action review" – invented by the US Army – to talk with your
team about what worked, what didn't and how to improve.

> *"Employ the management mindset to make decisions based on numbers and facts…use the leadership mindset to consider the people who will participate in making and executing the decisions." Alan S. Berson and Richard G. Stieglitz*

Conversations take
time and perseverance yet avoiding them leads to mistakes that consume
additional time and money to fix. Instead, use idea sharing and consensus
building to align your team's mission and your team members' understanding of
and commitment to the group's objectives.

Remain aware that personal engagement takes place at an emotional level based on relationships. The chain of

conversations starts with those relationships and leads to collaboration, shared ideas, better decisions, and more effective action.

Leadership Skills: Relationship Building Matrix

Who	Type of Leadership Conversation	When & Where	Notes/Results

What type of leadership conversation would you like to improve, and what will be the likely results of this improvement? Communication is a learned skill and mastering the art of the aforementioned leadership conversations is an investment in your success.

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"It is the small companies like Just Coach It that are leading the way, and Irene Becker is one of the finest runners in the race." Leon Benjamin, Author, Winning by Sharing, London, UK

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How to Build Engagement, Buy-In, and Success During a Period of Transformation, Transition, or Change

by Irene Becker, CSO, Just Coach It | 3Q Leadership Blog

How can YOU improve personal and professional results? Inspire the best in yourself and others? Become an agent of change? A pragmatic optimist and effective leader?

Here are ten proven ways to build your ultimate advantage the cognitive dexterity, emotional dexterity and the change agency you need to survive and thrive personally and professionally (your 3Q Edge). Enjoy the following tips, and remember small changes and repetition will take you forward faster, smarter and with less stress or frustration than before. (Scroll down to Cool Tools that can be done in 5 minutes or less.)

1. Position the current transition or transformation as a tremendous personal and professional growth opportunity. Becoming an agent of change is not only an organizational mandate but a personal and professional success step because engaging our ability to develop a new relationship with change, with ourselves and others is the best way forward.

2. Get pragmatically optimistic, brain smart (maybe even inspired) by what YOU CAN do.
Science confirms that we you can reset habitual patterns of thinking, communicating and doing (neuroplasticity) and doing so can even help get smarter (neurogenesis).

We are all wired for primal times when we were surrounded by predators and finding negative or threatening things in our environment was the way to survive, but you can turn this

around by developing a future-ready 3Q mindset!

3. Become a solution focused, solution driven and inspiring leader by building your 3Q edge. Traditional leadership
development focuses on adding new tools and competencies (horizontal
development). 3Q Leadership development
focuses on developing the mindset that facilitates and accelerates cognitive, emotional and
leadership dexterity (vertical development) while building skills. How can you start to build your 3Q Edge? Start now by incorporating "cool tools" (free, simple, powerful exercises that take
less than 5 minutes a day) and can help you become positive, growth focused and
future ready.

4. Don't ruminate, germinate.
Generate the feelings and building the mindset that will help you adapt,
evolve and GROW by developing a mantra (a few simple, powerful words) that will
help you let go of the habit of thinking that causes negativity, doubt or
reactivity. Expect miracles because you are one.

5. Purpose equals profit on a professional, personal and human level. Remember that the one common
denominator among all personality types is that human beings thrive on being
part of a bigger picture and feeling that they are making a positive
contribution, that their work is valued and appreciated. Emotion is always
stronger than logic and if you can tap into the values, purpose and emotion

that motivates a person you can move mountains and molehills.

6. Listen well, connect before you correct (or voice your opinion or agreement). People need to feel that what they have to say is important in order to really engage, and they must feel trust to embrace any kind of change. You do not have to agree with someone to listen, you simply need to give them the space to speak. Modelling the words, intonations, pace of speaking, and using similar body language because we are primally wired to like people who are like us (our tribe).

7. Science confirms that a little bit of positivity can make an enormous difference because positive comments cause our bodies to produce happy chemicals like oxytocin and the memories, we retain are those that produce a strong chemical reaction! Something as simple as putting a post it note saying, thank you or great work has been known to increase engagement and performance.

**8. Become a pragmatic optimist and
model this way of thinking**
because negativity does not create solution-based thinking. Science confirms we
do our best work when happy/positive. Conversely, negativity causes stress
which then restricts the blood flow to our prefrontal cortex which impairs the ability to think and reason in
a normal manner.

9. Set clear expectations, encourage honest feedback and ask questions that drive engagement, insight, collaboration. Get a head start on success and/or failing forward fast by helping to create a transparent environment that fosters feedback and by asking questions that are solution driven, drive engagement and new insights.

10. Remember that good leaders are meaning makers. The overarching driver of engagement is an alignment of values and

meaning described by researchers as a common purpose and a shared sense of meaning at work. Ask questions that inspire purpose, values alignment and meaning. Build your 3Q leadership skills and help peers and team members build theirs.

Here are some simple, powerful and FREE Cool Tools you can use in as little as 5 minutes a day to build your 3Q Edge (cognitive dexterity, emotional dexterity, 21st century leadership and results).

Help your people develop a new mindset and build their edge by using the cool tools that follow. They cannot say they are too busy because each tool takes less than 5 minutes a day, is free and can be done almost anywhere. Invest 5-10 minutes a day in developing your most important personal and professional advantage; emotional and cognitive dexterity-your 3Q Edge. Doing so can be fun and simple.

- Identify the path (walking/driving) you prefer, then take a different one.
- In a similar vein in your personal life, experiment with taking one old habit every week and tossing it out the window or changing it.
- Walk down a street you are familiar with and search for something you have never seen or noticed before. The results will surprise you!
- Uplift your posture. There are few more powerful ways to raise and sustain energy than to ease your posture upward, which frees your breathing and raises your energy level.
- Stretch your Strengths by applying them in new ways.
- Try writing a few sentences in the reverse direction, or with your opposing hand.
- Embrace new experiences. Focus on learning from everything! What you focus on grows, and a positive focus on learning will expand your learning potential.

- Change at least one routine every day.
- Pause for 10 seconds before you respond. Taking your ego (need to be validated) out of the equation and refocusing you on your objective.
- Take charge of tension by releasing it, fast. Clench whatever part of your body is tense and release it. Even better, do your whole-body clenching & releasing.
- Do The Pause. Yes, a mindfulness exercise that is transformative if practiced regularly
- Sip ice water. Fluids move hormones into exactly the right places for sustaining energy, and those same fluids eliminate toxic wastes that can accumulate and wear you down.
- Move more. Inactivity is an unnatural state for us, and it limits energy production.
- Laugh more, smile more. Laughing gives your brain an aerobic workout and is an excellent stress reliever and mood booster. Smiling automatically elevates our mood.
- Keep an emotional journal that is for your eyes only. A safe space on paper where you can write out your deepest emotions, releasing the tension associated with them.
- Take a 1-minute time out. Block out all stress or worries. Think about something that really makes you happy. Yes, take a happiness time out!

Devote 5 minutes a day for seven days to staying on top of your game!

Try
one or two on for size and remember that trying a strategy or exercise means
using it consistently for at least a week.
Share your results on the blog or write to me directly
 mailto:irene@justcoachit.com

3 Tips to Help You Boost Creativity in Your Team

Guest post by Ashley Wilson

Leaders have a penchant for inspiring their team members to do their best and achieve great outcomes.

Can they inspire creativity too?

source: pexels.com

Yes, leaders *can* make team members more creative—and the biggest companies today are already echoing this statement.

Google encourages its employees to spend 20% of their work time on creative projects, one of which leads to Google News.

Twitter's open workspaces are designed to get its people's brain juices flowing.

Apple built a worldwide following with its "Think Different" slogan.

Why is creativity important for organizations anyway? Isn't it reserved for more artistic, expressive ventures rather than B2B deals?

It turns out creativity is one of the most important soft skills to have in building successful businesses.

According to a study by Adobe, businesses that invest in creativity training see improvements of over 80% in vital areas like productivity and customer happiness.

In fact, the most in-demand trait that employers look for in 2019 *is* creativity.

While some are more imaginative than others, creativity can be taught and improved. As a leader, it is your responsibility to help your team members be more innovative in their work.

The question is: what can you do to boost creativity in your team?

Champion Creativity and Cultivate an Open Environment

The best thing you
can do to foster creativity is to create an environment that
allows it to
happen.

This is why the
workspaces of many leading companies feel more like an adult
playground rather
than an office; it gives team members freedom and with it
comes creativity.

**Be lenient (but reasonable) in giving your employees
breaks.** A snack or smoke break is all it takes for a
fatigued team member to bounce back and get creative.

This can also be
supplemented by **doing fun activities
from time to time**. Board games, team retreats, and office
sports are some
events you can consider to break the monotony of work.

The most important factor in boosting creativity, however, is
open communication.

When people are
allowed to discuss freely with each other, a creative
environment is
established where ideas and opinions are exchanged, eventually
resulting in
droves of innovative solutions.

Some moderation is
needed to stop discussions from going haywire but for the most

part, it's best
to give your team members the freedom they need.

How do you establish
an open environment in your organization?

Let your team members know it's OK to voice out their thoughts even if the opinion is not favorable for your company.

A lot of employees
are *still* afraid of speaking out as
they're worried about the consequences.

If your organization
is practicing this, understand that businesses lose $7,500 on average to employees
who don't speak up about a concerning project or situation.

Abolishing penalties
is not limited to opinions as well.

Give your employees permission to try out their ideas and more importantly, allow them to fail.

It might cost your
organization in the short-term but in the long run, consistent experimentation
will improve your business' innovation efforts a lot more than *not* thinking out of the box.

Don't Limit Your Team Internally, Mix Things Up

Collaboration can
boost innovation but there is a point where groupthink kills creativity

instead.

When the same
individuals work with each other for extended periods, it's
hard to maintain
inventiveness as each person can only come up with so many new
ideas at one
time.

To avoid this issue,
practice diversity.

One way to do so is
by **bringing in people outside of the
company to give your team members fresh perspectives on their
tasks**.

For example,
bringing in a loyal customer or an influencer in the industry
to work with your
employees can help them discover avenues they might have
missed—or are not even
aware of—which leads to increased creativity.

**Consider mixing up teams and departments to overcome
creative block.** The marketing team can take a day or
two to work with the accounting team to uncover useful
insights, for instance.

If you have a hand
in the hiring process, you can also **prioritize
candidates with varying backgrounds and skills to further
improve diversity**
in the company.

Multicultural
offices are excellent creativity boosters as well.

Another area where

variance makes sense is in **distributing
employee tasks**. We are not designed to work on the same thing every day
like robots. Variety is the spice of life and that applies to task delegation.

If your developers
have been coding every day for the past year, spruce things up by letting them
work with customer-facing departments for several days.

Working on different
tasks can give your team members a different outlook on their jobs which again,
brings tons of benefits to your organization's creativity.

Invest
in the Right Tools and Resources

Aside from
empowering your team members, **providing
the right tools and resources** is another integral part of enhancing
creativity.

Businesses of the
past had to rely on pen and paper to collaborate. Technology, however, has
changed that for the better.

Collaborative tools
like Trello and Jira are now staples in organizations as they are an effective
outlet for team members to store and share their creative work.

For example, you can
use an online drag-and-drop prototyping

tool to assist your organization's marketing department.

Not only does the
tool make it easy for team members to visualize their designs,
but staff from
other departments can also use it to share ideas even if they
have zero
experience in the field.

*Think of these tools as the engine for your organization's creative
vehicle.The vehicle is the final
product but without the engine, it won't be able to get to its
destination—your
organization's creative outcome.*

Even prominent
companies are using creativity tools to help them with
innovation.

Google champions the
Design Sprint ideology to power their creative processes while
IDEO practices
its famous 7 Rules for Brainstorming to empower its employees.

All of this is only
possible thanks to technology, with one of it being **cloud
computing.**

Collaborating with
teams inside and outside of the office all over the world,
generating key
insights, bringing productivity levels to all-time highs—these
are just some
benefits your organization stands to gain from using the
cloud.

**Training must also be included as part of your
investment.**

While cloud-based
tools are designed to be user-friendly, you should still educate your team
members to minimize errors and ensure they use the tools as efficiently as
possible.

Your Role as a Leader in Boosting Your Team's Creativity

Boosting creativity
among your team members is just a matter of establishing the right company
culture and providing the necessary tools and resources.

When done right, you
will **skyrocket your team's innovation levels** beyond your expectations—and that spells nothing but good news for
your organization.

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Ashley Wilson is working remotely as a content creator, writing mostly about business and tech. She has been known to reference movies in casual conversation and enjoys baking homemade treats for her husband and their two felines, Lady and Gaga. You can get in touch with Ashley via Twitter.

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