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Dear Alice,

With summer officially arriving this weekend, below are a handful of articles to keep your business swimming along - even though you would likely prefer to be at the pool.

The first article, **Recipe for Building Leaders: 3 Ingredients for Success**, offers ideas on how to keep employees engaged and energized all year round. Next, I interviewed executive coach Suzi Pomerantz about **How to Create Powerful Conversations That Get Results**. Last but not least is a review of **Scott Eblins's book, *The Next Level***. He provides some terrific tools that I think you'll be able to incorporate into the work you do with your employees.

As always, feel free to share this newsletter with friends and colleagues. For more information, contact me at alice@workforcelearning.com.



Recipe for Building Leaders: 3 Ingredients for Success

By Alice Waagen

If you were making a pizza but left off the sauce and cheese, you'd serve a bland lump of dough for dinner. The same thing happens when you provide a leadership development program without the essential ingredients: Time, variety, and a personal touch.

Consider this scenario:

A 300-employee Virginia-based data analysis company that served the transportation industry for more than two decades hit a speed bump in 2005. Its legacy computer system groaned under the weight of decades of patched code and costly outages were having a toll on customer service. Although the systems were rocky the employee-base was rock-solid. Most employees were incredibly loyal to the company with the average length of service topping more than 15 years. But the new corporate leaders brought in to upgrade technology platforms had misgivings about the managerial abilities of this legacy staff.

The Challenge: Was the management team capable of leading the organization's old timers through a massive change?

Leaders feared the new team wasn't up to the challenge, so they hired me to help upgrade management skills. Immediately, I saw a group of eager individuals who had learned how to be managers primarily by trial and error. But they were willing to learn and - most importantly - they were dedicated to helping the company succeed.

The Solution: Over the next three years, I worked closely with this slightly green management team to create a leadership development program designed to enable them to manage others through technological and organizational change.

- We dished out the program over a six-month period, providing half-day sessions to leaders once every six week.
- The extra time enabled me to develop programs based on each leader's learning style.
- In between sessions, I had plenty of time to meet with each team member, which enabled me to develop a personal trust-based relationship with them where I could act as their confidante.

The Results: By the end of the project, leaders had a new perspective on what needed to be done to ramp up the company to meet new standards, and upgrade some of their outdated skills and perspectives.

I continue to put these ingredients to work to upgrade leadership skills to help the managers effectively empower the employees to cope with changes that lay ahead. Here's how.

1. Make sure time is on your side

The Challenge: The traditional model for leadership development is to present employees with information about how to manage better. The information may be supplemented with interactive discussions and exercises, but is essentially a quick and dirty download of information that spans a few hours to a few days.

The problem with this one-time approach is that it does not build in time to think about how to use the new information back on the job. True learning only occurs when new information is

tested for effectiveness and determined valid. People need time to absorb and apply new information.

The Solution: That's why I led a series of half-day workshops, once a month, for six months.

The results:

- The participants had the opportunity to take in the new leadership advice, and then apply their new skills over the course of a month.
- Since we met six times over six-months, the multiple sessions allowed them to explore their new skills and experience various business cycles and organizational changes.
- The managers were also able to bring back real examples of their successes and failures, and as a group we were able to talk through their experiences. In the end, everyone benefited from these candid conversations.

2. Realize variety is the spice of life

The Challenge: Whenever I walk into a group leadership training session, I know there are at least six different types of learners sitting before me. Each takes in information and processes it differently. How can I reach everyone, in only a half day?

The Solution: Although it can be tricky to teach to a variety of learning styles, as the facilitator I know I need to have a clear understanding of the individual learning styles represented in the group. So I pass out a questionnaire before the session begins so I'm prepared to teach each of them so they learn best.

What's your learning preference?

Learning Preference	Instructional Technique
Participatory	Use interactive exercises, discussion groups and group problem solving
Summary	Use outlined text check lists and key point lists in handouts
Theoretical	Add research articles from think tanks and universities for additional reading
Reflective	Build in at least 30 minutes a session for individual reflection. Use planning worksheets and notes pages to encourage private thought
Detail	Provide additional reading in appendices as well as references and bibliographies for further learning
Applied	Require participant to bring current challenges and problems for discussion

The results: Taking the time to get to know the learning styles of my students are an approach that never fails. Time and again I find that not only are the participants actively engaged in solving real work problems and challenges, they form close interpersonal bonds during the 6 month program that enhanced team relations back at work.

3. Be a Confidante

The Challenge: Every time I walk into a new situation I face the same dilemma - within just a few hours I need to gain the trust of leaders so that they are engaged, interested, and open to learning. The truth is, however, that I'm a stranger.

The Solution: I hold private, one-on-one coaching sessions in between the monthly classroom workshops so that the participants had time to ask more personal questions and have someone to confide in. In these sessions, I did not use formal coaching methods. Instead, I simply asked the managers to talk about what they would have / could have done differently in a variety of situations, which helped them consider whether their management behavior was effective.

Once they felt they had mastered a variety of situations using the principles from the program, I asked them to share that with the other participants at the next session.

The results:

- One manager realized that her primary method of handling conflict with her boss was avoidance. After learning about the different conflict modes she was unaccustomed to use, she began dealing with disagreement with her boss and others much more effectively.
- A project manager used the leading change model to help a change resistant client adjust to an internal reorganization. He shared with the class that his biggest problem dealing with change was not with his project team - but with a resistant client. Once he identified the root of the issue, he was able to use one of the models he learned in the program to coach that client through necessary changes.
- Another manager expressed that she felt under-stimulated in her current role and was looking for more opportunities within and outside the company. We discussed various career options, but focused mostly on the positive and negative aspects of her current and past positions. When her boss approached her a few weeks later about a promotional opportunity, she was ready to seize it because she had spent the necessary time to decide what she valued most in her work.

For more information visit: www.workforcelearning.com.

How to Create Powerful Conversations That Get Results



An interview with leadership development expert Alice Waagen and executive coach Suzi Pomerantz

I recently interviewed master executive coach Suzi Pomerantz, the CEO of Innovative Leadership International LLC and author of 20 publications including her most recent book, "Seal the Deal: The Essential Mindsets for Growing Your Professional Services Business" (HRD Press, 2006). I recently saw an article she wrote entitled, "Powerful Conversations Generate Powerful Results," and wanted to talk to her more about this topic. Following is our discussion.

Alice Waagen: In your article, "Powerful Conversations Generate Powerful Results," you say that extraordinary results occur when executives expand their ability to listen beyond what is being spoken. But the key is to communicate so that people are inspired to take action. What do you mean, exactly?

Suzi Pomerantz: I believe that the time we spend with our colleagues, and our families and friends, too often we focus on how *we* feel, how *we* will be perceived - rather than the experience the other person is having. As a result, we become self-conscious, self-focused, and ultimately

ineffective.

The problem is that we don't want to be perceived as "less than," so we work to find the words right, sound sincere and knowledgeable, and are more focused on being interesting instead of *interested*. The secret to having an effective, powerful conversation - not to mention a powerful personal relationship - is to be sincerely interested in the other person.

Alice: You are particularly interested in educating people on how to be masters at having effective dialogues, right?

Suzi: Absolutely. Results happen through conversations. Real and important conversations only occur when two or more people engage in a discussion where they share ideas, thoughts, and authentic feelings.

It's the exact opposite of a monologue, which is that little voice in your head that makes you think that whatever fleeting thought you have is wise and insightful. Disregard that, because it doesn't involve a mutual sharing of ideas. Most likely, it's your ego speaking, and often it's a harbor for your own fears.

Alice: So how does a leader who wants to stay effective conduct a successful dialogue?

Suzi: The first step is to ask yourself, "what conversations do I need to have with whom to get the result I'm looking for?" Communicate any concerns that you have with someone you trust. Talk about what you think will happen if you engage in an authentic dialogue because that creates a healthy context for what you really want to talk about. Ask yourself, "Is there a conversation I *need* to have before I have the conversation I really *want* to have?"

Alice: So in order to have an effective dialogue, you want leaders to stay genuinely interested in what the other person has to say.

Suzi: It's critical. And you will know you are having a powerful conversation when the other person is sharing openly and honestly their concerns, providing feedback, and offering ideas. This is your opportunity to be truly interested in what they have to say.

Alice: Very interesting. That's actually something that I share with leaders when I do my workshops. And what I really appreciate about what are saying in this essay is the section at the end of the article where you talk about the things that move leaders away from have an effective dialogue.

Suzi: Yes, that's important stuff -- there are definitely buttons that a person can push to alienate others. These include turning to silence or negative assessments cloaked as feedback when it's obvious that the other person feels hurt or worried. Sometimes leaders try, and succeed, at turning the conversation their way when they don't trust the person they are talking to, but the goal is to increase awareness when trust is missing and generate trust in the conversation.

Alice: But there are ways to move the conversation back to having an effective dialogue.

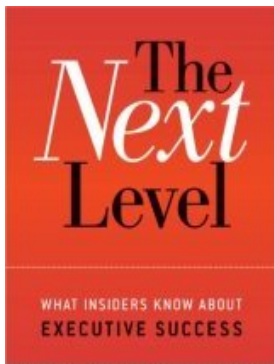
Suzi: Definitely. Leaders should pay particular attention if an employee tells them they feel hurt or worried. And if they tell you they are worried about completing a project, realize that what they are really saying is that they need your support. My colleague and friend, Sandor Kovacs, CEO of Run Rhino, often tells leaders: "*Anything that you are unwilling to communicate creates waste in an organization.*"

Alice: I love that quote. And what strikes me most about it is the fact that the conversations a leader chooses to avoid never really go away and often show up in unhappy employees and unproductive projects.

Suzi: You got it. A leader's ability to generate dialogue from a powerful place, and focus on another person's intelligence and point of view, helps them preemptively avoid conflict and distrust. In today's competitive environment, especially in this economy, is there anything more important than that?

Click here to access Suzi's website and read more about her perspective on leadership (www.innovativeleader.com).

The Next Level: What Insiders Know About Executive Success



Book by Scott Eblin (Davis Black Publishing)

The hallmark of a good book is its ability to bring simplicity to deep and complex topics. Scott Eblin's *The Next Level* does just that. His premise is simply this: As one advances to the executive level, he / she must add certain characteristics and behaviors and delete those that provide little value.

This makes perfect sense, of course. As any leader advances up the organizational ladder, their responsibilities and ability to make policy - and effect change - most definitely grow and mature. So along with any promotion, leaders must focus on how they manage their time and resources.

However, determining how and what to do differently can be daunting.

Fortunately, Scott's book provides a useful framework to help leaders make the transition. Based on interviews with 30 successful senior leaders, he concludes that to be successful those on this uphill climb need to build three levels of executive presence:

1. **Personal presence**-Leaders need to pick up: confidence in your presence, have a regular renewal of your energy and perspective, custom fit communications. And they need to let go of: doubt in how you contribute, running flat until you crash, one-size-fits-all communications.
2. **Team presence**-Pick up: team reliance, defining what you do, and accountability for many results. Let go of: self-reliance, telling how to do it, responsibility for a few results.
3. **Organizational presence**-Pick up: looking left and right as you lead, an outside-in view of the entire organization, a big footprint view of your role. Let go of: looking primarily up and down as you lead, an inside-out view of your function, and a small footprint view of your role.

I like these three categories because they reflect the primary domains of interaction used at any level: personal-how do I control my own actions, team-how do I interact with my team, and organization-how do I fit in the larger organizational context.

Although *The Next Level* focuses mostly on the leaders about to move in to the executive suite,

Scott's message is applicable to anyone advancing in an organization.

Don't miss a great opportunity this fall: The Emerging Leader Institute (ELITE)

Starting in September, Alice Waagen will be leading the Emerging Leader Institute (ELITE), a hands-on development program that provides employers with targeted management skills training for their key, high-potential managers.



Topics include:

- Leveraging Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Leading & Managing Change
- Effective Communication
- Performance Management
- Building Effective Teams
- Managing Conflict

For more information, contact Alice (alice@workforcelearning.com) and visit HeliosHR (www.helioshr.com) for program details and registration information.

Upcoming Speaking Engagements

Are you an independent professional, consultant, or, as the IRS sees us, paid using a Form 1099 rather than a W2? Come to the Free Agent Special Interest Group and learn from fellow independents how to better run your business. The Free Agent SIG is part of the DC Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (DC-ASTD). Here's the calendar of upcoming meetings and discussion topics:

Friday August 29 - Running Your Business by the Numbers - what financial and activity reports do you use to run your business?

Friday September 29 - New Technology Tools

Friday October 31 - Marketing Successes and Failure

Friday November 28 - Outsourcing

All meetings are held at La Madeleine's café, Reston Spectrum Plaza fro 8:30 AM to 10:00 Am.

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