

Ignite Newsletter March 2008

Sharing Your Leadership Point of View

People like to see into the heart of their leaders—to know that they're working for a good person; someone they can trust.

How do you really get to know your leaders at a level beyond day-to-day shared workplace goals? How do you bridge communications to get to know them at a more personal level? To understand their authenticity?

Most leaders are busy. And because they are juggling so many priorities, they can't take the time to be personal and to disclose and to inquire about the other person. This creates distance in a working relationship that erodes commitment and engagement.

Leaders need to close this engagement gap by sharing their experiences. When people have insight into their leader's thoughts, they become more connected. They give their best. Their commitment level is different.

Closing the Gap

Founding Associate Pat Zigarmi of The Ken Blanchard Companies® has worked extensively with leaders at all levels in organizations to close the engagement gap. The keys according to Zigarmi are self-reflection and transparency.

As she explains, "Clients come to us because they're seeing that people's emotional and rational commitment to the organization and to them personally as a leader, is enhanced when people understand their values and intentions."

To help leaders articulate their values and intentions Zigarmi uses the Blanchard® Leadership Point of View process. Developed by Ken and Margie Blanchard for use in the Masters of Science in Executive Leadership program at the University of San Diego, this process asks leaders to reflect back on their past experiences. Leaders then prepare for a presentation to their colleagues designed to answer two questions, "Who am I as a leader, and what do I stand for?"

Sharing Your Leadership Story

Ken Blanchard was sold on this idea after reading Noel Tichy's book, *The Leadership Engine*. Noel's extensive research has shown that effective leaders have a clear, teachable leadership point of view and are willing to teach it to others, particularly the people they work with.

One of the things that both Blanchard and Zigarmi have found most interesting in asking people to share their leadership point of view is the wide variety of experiences that people point to as influencing their leadership style. Some point to the impact that mentors, coaches, and bosses—both good and bad—have had on their leadership style. Others share stories about their parents, grandparents, friends, and teachers. Many of them have dealt with significant crises or challenges or tragedies in their life and have become stronger because of it.

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"Often what happens when these presentations are given is that you could hear a pin drop in the room," explains Zigarmi. "People are riveted, glued to the stories that their leaders, whom they've known for a while probably, are telling. I think it's about the willingness to share what your moral compass is, to share what your values are, that really brings people closer together."

Still, some people are nervous about sharing. According to Zigarmi the biggest challenge they voice is, "I'm going to be really uncomfortable doing this presentation because it's all about me. There's a lot of 'I' in the presentation."

"I have to remind them that it's a story about them. So they are the central character. There's no way to avoid that sense of 'I.' And what I have to do is just try to get them to trust that people want to know what their values are, what motivates them, what makes them tick."

Truly understanding "what makes someone tick" produces some very tangible results, according to Zigarmi.

"People will give you the benefit of the doubt in tough times. People will follow you. They will give you their best."

"And I think that's so significant. We can get so focused on the work we're doing together and on the results we're trying to achieve that we don't take the time to really understand others' points of view—what they bring to the moment of leadership. We don't take time to build that interpersonal connection."

Becoming More Intentional

Working on a leadership point of view causes people to do some serious thinking about what they're intending to do, or what they're aspiring to do when they lead others. Many people in leadership positions haven't done this type of thinking before.

As one colleague remarked to a CEO who presented his personal leadership point of view. "I've known you for 35

years and I've learned more about you in the last 45 minutes than I've ever known."

And that's what makes the leadership point of view process so powerful. It helps leaders be more fully themselves and subsequently more thoughtful and intentional in each moment of leadership.

As another leader remarked in reflecting back on the experience, "I would never form a new team or start a new enterprise with a new group of people without starting with this process, because I have so much more insight into them and they have so much more insight into me."

Elements of a Leadership Point of View

In developing a leadership point of view, The Ken Blanchard Companies believes that there are seven questions that a leader needs to ask him or herself in preparing to share their thoughts with others in their organization.

1. Who are the influencers (leaders) in your life? What did you learn from these people about leadership? How did their influences help your leadership point of view evolve?
2. Think of your life purpose. Why you are here and what do you want to accomplish?
3. Which of your core values will guide your behavior as you attempt to live your life "on purpose"?
4. Given what you've learned from past leaders, your life purpose, and your core values, what are your beliefs about leading and motivating people?
5. What can your people expect from you?
6. What do you expect from your people?
7. How will you set an example for your people?

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