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Quarterly Quote:

"Isn't it sad to go to your grave without ever wondering why you were born? Who, with such a thought, would not spring from bed, eager to resume discovering the world and rejoicing to be part of it?"

-Richard Dawkins

Great Link!

Noticing the extraordinary

As spring is a time of rejuvenation and inspiration, I wanted to share this great clip of Tony Robbins speaking on Why We Do What We Do. (21:48)

www.ted.com/talks/tony_robbins_asks_why_we_do_what_we_do.html

Greetings!

With the first crocuses peeking through the cold earth, nature signals that we've made it through another winter and that spring growth is upon us. I love the energy of this season. I feel awake and alive and I begin to clear out the cobwebs of my home and of my mind.

A few weeks ago, I went to Arizona for an intensive five-day course called "The Skilled Facilitator" by Roger Schwarz, based on his highly regarded text of the same title. I learned some important distinctions to help me clean out some old ways of thinking and deepen my skills. I want to share a little bit with you this issue in hopes that it might bring a little clarity to you as well.



May the vibrancy of spring find you well!

Warmly,
Kerry

Unilateral Control vs. Mutual Learning *A Distinction*

All of us have had sensitive conversations not go as we had hoped. Research shows that in stressful conversations 98 percent of us seek to unilaterally control things, "win" the discussion, and minimize the expression of negative feelings. Most of the time we aren't even aware of that, and if we are, we feel justified because it is such a common way of approaching hard conversations. We may believe, usually unconsciously, that:

- We know all we need to know while others who disagree are uninformed
- We are right and others who disagree are wrong, and
- We have pure motives while others' motives are questionable.

This causes us to act in ways that create misunderstanding, increased conflict, and defensiveness, particularly because the person we are speaking with may have the same beliefs. Typically, we are unaware of how our thinking contributes to our ineffectiveness, and point to others as a cause of our problems.

But there is a much more effective way- the Mutual Learning Model. This framework is based on five core values: transparency, curiosity, accountability, informed choice, and compassion. From this approach our assumptions are:

1. We have some of the information, and so do other people
2. Each of us may see things the others do not
3. I may be contributing to the problem
4. Differences are opportunities for learning
5. People may disagree with me and have pure motives

Reviews

"Kerry, you have done an excellent job of helping us get to know different leaders from different parts of our organization- this will help us work more effectively as a management group. Thank you!"

- Leadership series participant

Your Thoughts?

Engaging in dialogue

I'd love to hear your reactions and thoughts to this newsletter. To drop a note, email:

kerry@watershedcoachingllc.com

Receive the Newsletter:

If this was forwarded to you and you'd like to receive it in the future, please go to:

www.watershedcoachingllc.com/news.html

The Unilateral Control model is a default approach in many cases because of our perceived need to maintain control and authority. But a leader invoking the Mutual Learning model does not come across as weak. Instead, a leader who employs it well finds that he or she can lead and interact with others much more powerfully.

It may seem simple, but it is certainly not easy. When faced with danger (and a hard conversation is a modern day version of being chased by a tiger), blood actually moves from our brain into our limbs where we can fight or take flight, and we start using our defensive, primitive reptilian brain. The good news is that with deliberate practice we can build our skill set so that the next tough conversation doesn't need turn into a tiger fight. Read below for one way to begin changing those patterns.

Reflection Exercise

Moving from Theory to Action

To help you move toward a mutual learning approach, take a moment to reflect:

-Looking at the five assumptions in the mutual learning model, which one do you feel most closely aligned with already? What does that look like behaviorally?

-Which assumption is the most difficult for you? What does that look like behaviorally?

-Of the five, identify an assumption you'd like to cultivate. With whom might you practice? (Often identifying a specific person is helpful)

-What will help you to shift your thinking with this person?

After interacting with this person, it can be helpful to reflect on what went well and what you'd like to change for the next conversation.

Book Review

The Skilled Facilitator -Roger Schwarz

This is a comprehensive book, filled with valuable concepts that can fundamentally shift the quality of interactions with groups and teams. I highly recommend this book for those who wish to deepen their learning in their approach to leadership. Schwarz outlines ways to diagnose behavior, as well as how to intervene appropriately to increase group effectiveness. In addition to explaining his Mutual Learning Model, he offers nine ground rules for effective groups (e.g., state views and ask genuine questions, test assumptions and inferences, and jointly design next steps).

It also has an important section on how to facilitate within your own organization, which can be uniquely challenging. This book provides incredible depth to return to again and again.



Kerry Secret is a leadership coach for individuals and organizations who inspires the best in individual and organizational performance.

Please feel free to contact me with comments, questions or to find out how I can help you or your organization!

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