

Leadership Workshops That Really Work

Self-Awareness Training



by Holly Latty-Mann, Ph.D.

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP breathes energy into the workforce, causing it to take on a life of its own.

Those impacted by it will, in turn, energize those who may not be in direct contact with the original energy breathers.

Most employees are eager to come to work and make a difference; however, there are also some who fit a “problem” description. You know the problem types:

- She probably leaves wounded spirits in her wake but has the technological knowledge base along with a wealth of experience that outshines others in her industry.
- He’s the serious executive, almost invisible, and although regarded as brilliant, is considered non-communicative.
- She’s the dysfunctional pleaser with the disease to please.
- He’s unseasoned and lacks the confidence that would bring him up to par.
- She’s a rising star whom you wish to groom for a promotion.
- He’s the boss’ son who stands in line for succession but isn’t ready.
- She’s already a good leader and simply wishes to go from good to great.

With the exception of the last bullet above, what they all have in common is an inability to inspire and motivate others. Their people tend to comply out of fear or inertia with low energy and creativity.

Once you decide to make the investment to develop a key player, what then must you look for to ensure you receive a sizable ROI?

Self-Awareness Training

Look for leadership training that has self-awareness as its focus: Have a 360-feedback process in place that elicits positive and negative input from bosses, colleagues, and direct reports. Find one that seeks additional input from family and friends to determine what is working and not working in that person’s delivery system (personality). Should the key player have no direct reports, simply have those whom they impact offer input. Input tends to be more meaningful when it results from open-ended questions that elicit open-ended responses. The process should help key players experience themselves through the eyes of others and feel to some extent what others have felt.

• **Make sure there are some assessments involved.** The Myers-Briggs, for example, likely will be one assessment used to pro-

vide the strengths and weaknesses of each of the communication styles people exhibit. Distinguishing their own style from the remaining styles of others helps them make constructive use of that knowledge.

• **Make sure the training is experiential in nature, which tends to get to the heart of self-awareness.** This is also the only way to evoke an emotion, which can remain private or internal, but nevertheless is necessary for permanent change to take place. Usually this requires the workshop to limit the seating capacity, as this almost always involves some degree of one-on-one interaction with the facilitator.

• **Make sure there are some right-brain exercises.** The right brain houses creativity, intuition, emotions, sensations, imagination, kindness, beauty, and truth, among many other non-analytical functions. Einstein said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” He also said, “The ideas that have lighted my way and have given me new courage to face life cheerfully have been kindness, beauty, and truth.” Leaders must be in touch with their right brain to create a meaningful connection with others. It is one of the most powerful ways to inspire and motivate others. “Nobody cares what you know until they know that you care.”

• **Leadership workshops are all about perception management.** It does not matter whether the perception is true or not; what matters is that it is true to the person who perceives a negative quality in the target person. It is up to the attendee to turn that perception around to a positive one. To do this, one must take a long look into that psychological mirror, which is a highly personal pathway to getting to “know thyself.” A competent facilitator can manage this process such that the attendee remains highly motivated to see the “good, bad, and the ugly” along with the heightened motivation to do something about it. Once people gain self-awareness, they have usually mastered other-awareness, which is key to effective leadership.

Action Plans

Look for leadership training that involves creating a tailored action plan. It is one thing to receive feedback and experience insights into one’s unique leadership style, and another thing to know exactly how to make it work. Action plans need the specifics of how, what, where, when and who: With whom must I create a new behavior? Or with whom must I stop doing a behavior? By what date will I enact each part of my plan? This is easy to do with a good format that lends itself to

taking the feedback data and re-arranging it into a meaningful picture of what it would look like if acted upon at work.

Before the person returns to work, he or she should start internalizing the personalized leadership action plan. The plan should be practiced naturally with a mutually supportive team, thus providing a fertile setting for new behaviors to take root.

Make sure the workshop prepares people to carry out this plan back at work. The person must be prepared to share on some level his or her experience. Give people the chance to acknowledge what they have learned, while thanking everyone for the gift of feedback. This shows it was received in a non-defensive nature, which helps others shed their defenses as well.

Other Factors

What factors should you consider to find a highly effective leadership workshop? Have a facilitator who will openly share his or her own past challenges and pain along the path to victory. The best facilitators tend to be those who have worked long on their own issues and can impart the nature of the challenges and rewards involved.

What about the need for the leadership organization to be affiliated with a university? Again, this does not build in a guarantee, but does tend to offer greater credibility. Your best bet is to use this criteria to determine fit.

You can also send a scout to check out the workshop. Some leadership trainers may even offer a discount along with a stipulation that if the scout comes back satisfied, your next participant will pay the full fee. Your scout should first be someone whom others respect rather than someone problematic. This scout should return with no reservations about the workshop for you to make the decision to send others.

My best advice on who should attend first is not just any scout but rather the CEO, assuming you have done your homework and it appears you’ve found an effective leadership training program. Next would be the HR person who oversees training. Too many top executives waste energy worrying what others may think of their attending a leadership workshop. It takes a strong sense of self for a CEO to shed that nonsense and go. If he or she attends a leadership workshop that really works, the time spent away will prove to be a small price to pay for the impressive bottom-line effects that should show up within weeks.

As Maya Angelou said, “People may forget what you’ve said and done. But they will never forget how you made them feel.” Effective leadership leaves within others the memories of having been highly valued for the dedication and productivity that grew the company. EE

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ACTION: Get involved in leadership training.