

Bainbridge Leadership Center

Changing the World One Leader at a Time

Enhancing Employee Engagement with *The Power of TED* (*The Empowerment Dynamic)*

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Employee engagement – which is at the heart of aligning performance and potential – is shockingly low. According to the 2004 Gallup Employee Engagement Index, merely 29% of employees feel fully engaged in their work, while 54% report not being engaged, and another 17% are knowingly disengaged. No more than 1/3 of employees report that they are passionately committed to the work they do; who they work with and for; and the customers or clients they serve.

Engaged employees contribute to a healthy workplace characterized by both high performance and high engagement; make more money for the organization; and stay with the organization longer. Clearly, engagement matters.

In our work with a wide range of organizations, leaders, and teams, we have observed a major reason for the lack of engagement can be traced to the amount of time and energy that goes into ineffective and non-resourceful relationship dynamics. Workplace “drama” drains our energy, reduces innovation and depletes our passion for our work.

This way of working together does not have to be the norm.

The Default Orientation and DDT

The prevailing orientation in most organizations is problem-focused, anxiety motivated, and reactive in nature. In such an environment vision is unclear and may shift depending on circumstances; there are perpetual fire drills; things “fall through the cracks” or take forever to get to completion; and conversations center on what individuals and teams *don't want and don't like*.

When asked to describe what it is like to work while in this orientation, workshop participants usually report feeling frustrated, reactive, gossipy, blaming, and burned-out, often lamenting, “I feel like a victim.” That is why we call this the Problem or Victim Orientation.

No wonder it is a challenge for individuals to feel fully engaged in such an environment! In such a setting, relationships play out the toxic dynamics we call the Dreaded Drama Triangle™ (DDT). First described as the drama triangle by Stephen Karpman PhD, the DDT involves three intertwined roles:

1. **Victim.** The central figure in the DDT, a Victim is one who feels powerless or, in this context, has lost

a sense of purpose, passion and engagement with their work.

2. **Persecutor.** The Persecutor is the Victim's perceived (or real) threat. The Persecutor may be a person such as a "bad boss," a difficult coworker, or an irate client. It can be impersonal, such as an economic downturn. Whether a person, condition, or circumstance, the Persecutor dominates the Victim's time and attention.

3. **Rescuer.** The Rescuer intervenes to help the Victim relieve the "pain" of their victimhood and/or to be the hero and fix the situation. Despite having helpful intentions, the Rescuer reinforces the Victim's powerlessness.

The DDT can consume an inordinate amount of nonproductive time and energy, wasting a lot of employee potential.

Adopting a Creator Orientation and TED* (*The Empowerment Dynamic)™

Effective employee engagement requires the shift to a more empowering and resourceful mindset and set of relationship dynamics.

Adopting a Creator Orientation is the key. This mindset puts the focus on envisioned outcomes and is passion-motivated in creating those outcomes. Employees' emphasis is on *what they want*, rather than on what they don't want. They still face and solve problems, but they do so in the course of creating outcomes, rather than merely reacting to them.

This orientation sets the stage for a whole new set of empowering roles to emerge. TED* (*The Empowerment Dynamic) is comprised of three roles that are antidotes to the toxic roles of the DDT:

1. **Creator.** The antidote to the powerless Victim, a Creator cultivates their capacity to manifest outcomes. They also own their responsibility to choose their response to the challenges they face, rather than merely reacting to them.

2. **Challenger.** A Challenger is a catalyst for change, learning, and growth for a Creator and serves as an antidote to the Persecutor. While many Challengers show up as unwanted or uninvited "thorns in our sides," TED* also involves developing skillful, conscious and constructive Challengers whose intentions are on sparking change. In either case, a Creator is able to embrace the experience of a Challenger as a call to action, learning, and growth.

3. **Coach.** As the antidote to a Rescuer, who reinforces the powerlessness of a Victim, a Coach views others as being inherently creative and resourceful. A Coach supports others by asking questions that help clarify envisioned outcomes, current realities, and possible next steps.

Adopting a Creator Orientation and cultivating the roles of Creator, Challenger and Coach can definitely make a bottom-line difference. One of our clients (the CEO of a technology services company) reported a 4-fold increase in prospects and experienced a 32% growth over the previous year--almost unheard of in this business climate! He attributed this success to championing a Creator Orientation and the TED* roles for himself and his organization.

Facilitating the Shift

In order to facilitate making “shift happen” from a Victim to Creator Orientation, it is important to begin by acknowledging the toxic DDT roles that exist and to develop the capacity to understand and adopt their antidote TED* counterparts.

To shift from Victim to Creator (both the orientations and roles), an individual and/or team must focus on what they want rather than what they don’t want and move from reacting problems to choosing outcomes and responses to circumstances.

The shift from Persecutor to Challenger can take place on one or two different levels. First and foremost, being able to take some perspective and discern the learning and growth a Challenger is sparking enables one to begin to choose their response, rather than merely reacting.

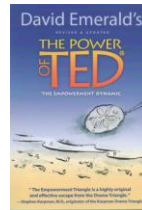
For individuals, or even teams, that are perceived by others as a Persecutor, the work is to become conscious, constructive Challengers by clarifying their intent. Here it is vital to distinguish between a “looking good intention” (i.e. to be right or the hero or to one-up) and a “learning intention,” which is focused on capability and capacity building. Conscious Challengers possess clarity of intention, the ability to see the other as a Creator, and the desire to enhance growth and development.

The shift from Rescuer to the Coach begins with seeing others as creative and resourceful. Rescuers want to be of support. However, the unintended consequence is that they reinforce others’ victimhood. As a Rescuer, one must be able see how they are continuing the DDT and unknowingly fostering the Victim mindset when they embody the Rescuing role.

Instead, as a Coach, one develops the ability to support others asking them questions that:

1. help clarify the outcome(s) they want to create;
2. assess their current reality by identifying and leverage what is going well and supports their vision, as well as what may be occurring that thwarts or inhibits creating the outcome; and
3. discern and commit to action in responding to their current reality and to move in the direction of achieving their outcome(s).

By adopting a Creator Orientation and enhancing their capabilities as Creators, Challengers, and Coaches, individuals and teams are invigorated and more engaged in creating the outcomes – and achieving the results – of the organization.



For more information:

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