

Employee Engagement

Coaching the shift to empowerment

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Employee engagement is at the heart of aligning performance and potential. And it is shockingly low. According to a 2004 Gallup Employee Engagement Index, a mere 29 percent of employees feel fully engaged in their work, while 54 percent report not being engaged and another 17 percent are knowingly disengaged. No more than one-third of employees report that they are passionately committed to the work they do, to whom they work with and for, and to the customers or clients they serve.

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

In our work with a wide range of organizations, leaders and teams, we have observed that a major reason for the lack of engagement can be traced to the amount of time and energy lost

on 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. Coaching can play a crucial role in facilitating the shift to a highly fulfilling, resourceful and productive work environment that aligns performance and potential.

Default Orientation

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

to work in this type of organization, workshop participants usually report feeling frustrated, reactive, gossipy, blaming and burned-out, and lament: “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 this 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 potential of the average person is like a huge ocean unsailed, a new continent unexplored, a world of possibilities waiting to be released and channeled toward some great good.”

Brian Tracy,
author & speaker

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. 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.

Creator Orientation

Effective employee engagement requires the shift to a more empowering and resourceful mindset and set of relationship dynamics – a shift coaches can help facilitate.

Adopting a Creator Orientation is the key. This mindset puts the focus on envisioned outcomes and is passion-motivated toward 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. The Empowerment Dynamic (TED) is composed of three roles that are antidotes to the toxic roles of the Dreaded Drama Triangle™ (DDT):

1. Creator. The antidote to the powerless Victim, Creators cultivate their capacity to manifest outcomes. They also greatly own their responsibility to choose their response to the challengers 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. As a professional Coach we can help a Rescuer develop the skills of inquiry in order to embody the Coach role in service to others.

Adopting a Creator Orientation and cultivating the roles of Creator,



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Challenger and Coach can definitely make a bottom-line difference. One of our clients (a CEO of a technology services company) reported a four-fold increase in prospects and experienced a 32 percent 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.

Coaching the Shift

Coaching is an important intervention to facilitate making “shift happen” from a Victim to Creator Orientation. As coaches, we help clients acknowledge 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), we

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the other as a Creator, and the desire to enhance growth and development.

Coaching the shift from Rescuer to Coach begins with helping clients see others as creative and resourceful. Rescuers want to be of support. However, the unintended consequence is that they reinforce others’

ask our clients to focus on what they want rather than what they don’t want and move from reacting to problems to choosing outcomes and responses to circumstances. We support them in committing to action and hold them accountable for follow-through.

In coaching for the shift from Persecutor to Challenger, we work at two different levels. First and foremost, we help clients discern the learning and growth a Challenger is sparking. For clients who are perceived by others as a Persecutor, we encourage them to become conscious, constructive Challengers by clarifying their intent. We often ask, “What is your intention? To be right and convince, or to connect, collaborate and support learning?” Conscious Challengers possess clarity of intention, the ability to see

victimhood. We must help our clients see that they are continuing the DDT and unknowingly fostering the Victim mindset when they embody the Rescuing role. We coach them to develop the ability to support by asking questions that help others discern how to respond to the challenges they face.

Coaches are critical to facilitating the shift. It has been said that the hallmark of great leaders is not that they have followers, but that they produce other leaders. The hallmark of effective coaches is that we facilitate our clients increasing their capacity as Creators, Challengers and Coaches in their working relationships with others. In doing so, we serve in helping align performance, potential and employee engagement.

Columns



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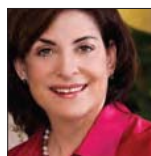


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