AMA RESEARCH

Cultivating Innovative Thinking and Behaviors
See page 4

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

Women's Leadership Certificate Program

Develop Extraordinary Leaders in Your Organization

Ask how we can help you build a thriving women's initiative

AMA RESEARCH

Cultivating Innovative Thinking and Behaviors

AMA's recent global study looked at factors such as psychological safety.

Page 4

16 Review Your Thoughts, Actions, and Impact

19 What's So New About Corporate Strategy in the Innovation Era?

FEATURES

The Keys to Achieving Workplace Innovation

Are the words "innovation" and "corporate culture" mutually exclusive?

They shouldn't be. Though some corporate culture moves may seem to be designed to modify everyone at the company into a cheerfully bland, performative, unquestioning uniformity, the reality is, if your corporate culture is stifling individuality and independent thinking, it's also stifling innovation.

American Management Association is continuing to look at the links between innovation, leadership, and culture, and this issue of *AMA Quarterly* offers some more perspectives.

In a deeper dive on AMA's featured research, AMA found that people whose managers make them feel psychologically safe and comfortable with sharing their ideas are far more likely to engage in innovative work behaviors related to idea generation and development. And to make the workplace a fertile ground for ideas, leaders need to support the development, resources, and implementation of these concepts so that employees feel like generating them isn't an exercise in futility.

Paul Eccher of Vaya Group says leaders must now possess a well-rounded skill set that includes emotional intelligence, communication abilities, and creativity. "Accordingly, leadership development and training methods must keep pace to adequately prepare managers to navigate this evolving landscape," he writes. "Today, programs must provide newer and better opportunities for candidates to learn and develop the skills they need to succeed."

Thomas Epperson examines the role of self-reflection in leadership, and recommends that you review the impact of your thoughts and actions. He states that self-refection is one of the best tools available to leaders if they want to learn from their successes, learn from their mistakes, and learn from the example of others.

For many people, being a more innovative leader and generating innovative ideas are not inherent skills, but they can be learned. Look to AMA to support your educational journey.

Christiane Truelove

Christiane Truelove
Guest Editor, *AMA Quarterly*

Innovation's Continuing Role in Fostering Growth

For many executives, the idea of innovation in their industry is only beginning to resonate. Yet customers' growing expectations are pushing all organizations to prioritize innovation to remain competitive.

Almost anything can be, will be, or has been subject to innovation, which is simply the creation, development, and execution of new and valuable processes, services, or products. It can range from modest changes that improve a single individual or team's work processes incrementally to radical new ideas that can have an impact across an entire organization.

AMA's recent global research study on innovation suggests that every organization can and should consider innovation to be part of its regular core work. Leaders need to support the resources for developing and implementing new ideas so that employees feel like generating them isn't an exercise in futility.

The key to fostering innovation in an organization is to establish leaders who can help employees solve problems by applying creative thinking and innovative work behaviors (IWBs). IWBs are defined as any intentional action directed toward the generation, development, promotion, or realization of new ideas that are beneficial to the organization and its customers. Evidence indicates that increased IWBs result in improved organizational performance.

In this issue, we address actions and motivations to help organizations develop a culture of innovation and increase employees' willingness to engage in IWBs—and ultimately position organizations for continued growth in an increasingly competitive environment.

Manny Avramidis
President and CEO
American Management Association

Cultivating Innovative Thinking and Behaviors

BY CHRISTIANE TRUELOVE

"Innovation"

is a concept that gets thrown around a lot in the business world, and it may seem that if a manager chants that word enough, their company will be magically transformed. But innovation is more than an abstract; it can be real practice based on real actions. And it's not just for tech start-ups or market disruptors, as innovation is good for any business.

According to a report by Citrix, almost half of growth in some industries is now due to innovative new products, services, or ways of working, and for every 1% increase in innovation spend, organizations are realizing, on average, an estimated 1.95% increase in overall revenues. These are not abstractions, but real results. Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, companies need innovation more than ever.

INNOVATION IS FOR EVERYONE

AMA recently did a global study on how organizations can maximize their innovation potential. The online survey was conducted in January and February 2022 of 6,000 full-time employees, aged 21 years or older, across a range of industries, in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan, and India.

AMA defines innovation as "the creation, development, and execution of new and valuable processes, services, or products" and it "can range from modest changes that improve a single individual or team's work processes incrementally, to radical new ideas that can have an impact across an entire organization. Both incremental and radical innovation have their place in gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage."

Innovation can be leveraged by all industries, even though each has different goals. The key to innovation at any company is establishing leaders who are able to prepare employees to solve problems with creative thinking and innovative work behaviors (IWBs). So what are the strategies that leaders can use to cultivate innovation?

WHERE AND WHY DOES INNOVATION THRIVE?

AMA looked at companies that are considered to be highly innovative and found that there are several factors that innovative companies have that make them stand out from others.

One factor is that at these companies, innovation is seen as everyone's job. In the AMA survey, 62% of employees at highly innovative companies stated that they feel like being innovative is part of their job, compared with just 15% of all the other respondents. And this feeling is not just among leaders, but extends even to individual contributors in highly innovative organizations, with 46% of respondents saying innovation is part of their job (compared with 10% of individual contributors at other organizations).

IDENTIFYING THE FACTORS OF MOTIVATION

Let's face it, as a result of the pandemic, a lot of workers have spent time thinking about what they want from work and achieving a better work-life balance. Last year came the phenomenon of the Great Resignation, in which many entrepreneurial employees left their employers to start their own businesses. The AMA survey found that 23% of respondents still intend to leave their organization within the next 12 months. These departures, whether through retirement or resignation, mean

AMA found that 23% of the survey respondents still intend to leave their organization within the next 12 months.

62% of employees at highly innovative companies feel that being innovative is part of their job, compared with **15%** of all the other respondents.

that companies lose experience, generational knowledge, and insight that could have driven innovation.

Hiring managers are now finding that the old inducements to attract and retain employees—"fun" open-plan offices, healthy snacks, foosball tables, catered lunches—are not doing the trick anymore. These are all part of what is called "extrinsic motivation," which relies on tangible rewards and has been found to be ineffective in increasing retention or innovative work behaviors. Intrinsic motivation, in which the employee finds the work fun or interesting, is also not a longtime motivator of innovation, as feelings about the work can change.

What is a longtime motivator? Experts say it's identified motivation. This is the drive a person feels from identifying and internalizing the value and importance of a behavior and its alignment to their own personal goals, values, and identities. Unlike intrinsic motivation, organizations and their leaders can help employees feed their own identified motivation by emphasizing each individual's role in helping the organization fulfill its purpose more effectively through innovation.

GROWING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Innovation does not happen in a vacuum. It is fed by not only the desire but also the expertise and perspectives of employees. Every employee that leaves takes away institutional knowledge, and among those who remain, if there is no motivation or training to learn new skills, there will be no innovation. To address this, leaders can

hire top performers, develop top performers, or use both approaches.

CULTIVATING INNOVATION

Gardeners know that simply throwing seeds into the ground and hoping for the best will not produce a bountiful harvest. Good gardeners will spend time generating seedlings, preparing the ground, and enriching the soil, making sure it's right before planting begins. Once those seedlings are in the ground, you want to make sure they get enough water and fertilizer, and be vigilant about weeding to prevent them from being choked out.

Just as a neglected garden will yield a pitiful harvest, many companies are not fertile ground for new ideas. Among the key findings of the AMA survey, nearly 4 in 10 employees stated that they have had an idea to improve something at work, but because of the oppressive atmosphere, did not even bother to share it. These are missed opportunities to improve an organization's performance.

Leaders need to support the development, resources, and implementation of new ideas so that employees feel like generating them isn't an exercise in futility.

DO YOU HAVE A CLEAR VISION?

As a leader, it's up to you to communicate a clear understanding of what the organization does, how, why, and for whom. Otherwise, your employees will not be able

"AMA's survey found that people whose managers make them feel psychologically safe and comfortable with sharing their ideas are far more likely to engage in IWBs related to idea generation and development."

to see how things can be improved. Don't be stingy on sharing general knowledge, or even sharing insights between departments. Inspiration can come from anywhere, and though some information will have to be on a need-to-know basis, the more that can be shared, the more likely employees will feel that they can offer insight.

DON'T DISCOURAGE PEOPLE FROM TRYING (AND EVEN FAILING)

It's true that not every idea that is tried is going to be a success. But failures can be learned from, and the lessons from them can be used for future successes. If an employee feels that their innovative ideas will lead to ridicule and career failure, however, they are going to hold them back. AMA found that 82% of employees at innovative organizations accept that risk and failure are part of the innovation process, compared with 51% of employees at other companies.

An idea may never even make it out of the brainstorming session. But making your suggestion box a black hole, where ideas go and are never heard of again, is not the way to cultivate innovation. Managers who are able to take a viable idea and quickly make it a reality, if they have the autonomy to make those decisions, will encourage team members to share other ideas that could lead to even greater successes.

Managerial support definitely has an impact on whether people consistently engage in innovative behaviors, studies have found. AMA found that just 26% of those they survived strongly agree that their managers encourage them to come forward with new ideas. Additionally, a significant number of those who admitted to withholding their ideas say they did so because their managers discourage them from trying to change things in their organization. Don't be that kind of manager. If your employees feel that they

can come to you with any idea, even if it's slightly impractical, more innovation will result.

ENCOURAGING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Expanding on the concept of allowing your employees to fail, one of the biggest things a manager can do to encourage innovation and have employees come forward with new ideas is creating an atmosphere where everyone on the team feels valued, included, and respected.

A McKinsey study from December 2021 found that among the top reasons employees cited for leaving, 54% said they didn't feel valued by their organizations, and 52% didn't feel valued by their managers. But AMA's survey found that people whose managers make them feel psychologically safe and comfortable with sharing their ideas are far more likely to engage in IWBs related to idea generation and development.

Ultimately, innovation at any company is not just up to the leaders, and managers must be open to employees' ideas. Good leaders should not hold employees back and should offer the knowledge, skills, tools, and inspiration to cultivate innovative thinking and behaviors. In a world of change, leaders need to help their employees navigate—and allow them to take the lead as well. AQ

Christiane Truelove is the guest editor of AMA Quarterly, and a freelance writer who contributes to several organizations and publications.

82% of employees at innovative organizations accept that risk and failure are part of the innovation process.
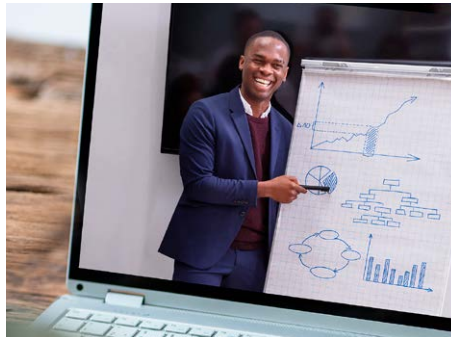
LEARN CRUCIAL SKILLS FROM ANYWHERE

Keep goals on track with AMA's Online Learning Options

LIVE ONLINE SEMINARS

Our most popular instructor-led, interactive seminars. Participants learn and collaborate virtually, right at their desktops—individually or in closed team sessions.

LIVE ONLINE EXPRESS COURSES

Powerful, tightly focused skills in just 2.5 hours with our expert instructors.

AMA ONDEMAND COURSES

24/7/365 self-paced, fully scalable, 15-90 minute lessons. Individual courses or a full library.

WEBINARS

90-minutes of quick skills and knowledge, with takeaway support materials.

Help your teams build versatile skills in multiple areas. Great choice of preferred learning formats—convenient timeframes—and no travel necessary!

LEARN MORE:
www.amanet.org/online-learning

DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S LEADERS
Tips, Trends, and Technologies

BY PAUL ECCHER

Today's business leaders are expected to do more than ever before to guide their teams through unprecedented times that are filled with ambiguity and new frontiers.

Many must now lead and develop remote or hybrid employees and instill a sense of teamwork and culture across an increasingly distributed workforce. Managers must also understand the unique needs of a diverse set of constituents, as well as overcome the challenges of the Great Resignation by providing more career advancement and personalized training to retain promising talent.

In the past, managers were often chosen based on their experience and technical skills. However, leaders must now possess a well-rounded skill set that includes emotional intelligence, communication abilities, and creativity. Accordingly, leadership development and training methods must keep pace to adequately prepare managers to navigate this evolving landscape. Today, programs must provide newer and better opportunities for candidates to learn and develop the skills they need to succeed.

The traditional leadership development model was limited, inflexible, and often inconvenient for learners. Current leadership development programs have evolved in tandem with the growth of online learning platforms. For example, emerging leaders now prefer more integrative, on-demand

courses like those found on LinkedIn Learning and TED. The advent of technology-based platforms for training delivery has provided a means for more accessible, self-paced training on demand.

How can you stay ahead of the curve and ensure that you're providing the best possible learning experience for employees? By following some of the latest trends in leadership development and training. Let's take a look.

UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEADERS

First, to provide the best possible training, leadership development programs must address different types of leaders. There are two basic categories of leaders: emerging leaders and those with experience who need refinement.

Emerging leaders are those who have the potential to become great leaders, but they may not have all the skills required. They are often in the early stages of their career and may be new to a leadership role. The best way to train emerging leaders is through active learning opportunities, which include methods

such as experiential learning, online learning, and social learning. These methods allow learners to interact with others, learn from their experiences, and apply what they've learned in a real-world setting.

Experienced leaders often need refinement. They may have the skills required for a leadership role, but they may not be using them in the best way possible. Training experienced leaders usually involves providing them with more active mentoring, feedback, and coaching, in addition to some of the approaches described earlier.

LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leaders are also increasingly turning to technology for learning and development opportunities. Technology-based methods provide a means for flexible, accessible training no matter where employees are—literally and figuratively. These types of approaches include flexible online learning platforms, soft skills focus, gamification techniques, and experiential learning.

One of the trending ways to deliver leadership development training is the use of flexible online learning platforms. These platforms allow learners to access content anywhere, anytime, and on any device. They also provide a variety of features that can enhance the learning experience, such as video content, social media interaction, and gamification.

In addition to technical skills, managers need to develop a variety of soft skills in order to be successful. These typically include listening, empathy, collaboration, and more. One way to develop soft skills is through active learning opportunities where leaders can interact more with technology and give and receive feedback. For example, employees can take online courses that use interactive tools such as discussion forums and chat rooms.

Gamification is the process of using game mechanics in non-game contexts. This can include points, badges, leaderboards, and friendly competition. Gamification has been shown to be an effective way to engage learners and increase motivation. In addition to being fun, games also can be a powerful tool for learning. Virtual reality (VR), for example, offers a realistic, immersive experience that can help learners understand new concepts and environments. It also can be used to train people on how to handle difficult situations. For example, a leader might use VR to practice dealing with a difficult customer or teammate or to learn about a new culture.

Experiential learning involves hands-on experience and reflection. It allows leaders to apply what they've learned in a real-world setting. One way to provide experiential learning is through technology-based leadership development programs that offer simulations. These programs allow participants to role-play different scenarios, such as leading a team, making decisions under pressure, and handling conflict.

EMBRACE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES

In addition to technology-based learning opportunities, there are a couple of other trends in leadership development that have been proven to show results in improving desired skills.

> "By addressing the whole person, you can better understand their strengths, weaknesses, goals, and personality traits."

One popular way to use technology for leadership development is through microlearning. This type of learning approach delivers short, focused lessons that are easy to absorb. Microlearning is ideal for busy leaders who want to learn on their own schedule. With the ability to provide short lessons and give leaders the chance to practice new skills on the job, microlearning creates stronger learning experiences and makes retention easier. By breaking down content into manageable chunks and then reviewing and practicing skills, leaders are more likely to apply these lessons on the job. It also supports long-term habit-building to create lasting positive behaviors. Delivering training in small steps and providing feedback and positive reinforcement along the way make it easier for people to digest and incorporate in their daily routines.

Leaders also want learning experiences that are tailored to their individual needs. This can be done through the use of adaptive learning software, which adjusts the content and difficulty level based on the learner's performance. In addition, leaders can benefit from personalized coaching and mentoring relationships. By addressing the whole person, you can better understand their strengths, weaknesses, goals, and personality traits. From there, you can create a training program that aligns their aspirations with the company's needs.

ENHANCE RETENTION WITH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Organizations with high retention rates are holding onto their employees for a reason. These companies have realized that you can teach leadership skills to someone who is still an individual contributor because that person needs to lead. Leadership can occur in many forms, such as meetings, projects, and day-to-day activities. Creating an environment where employees can use their leadership skills to make a difference is what keeps people motivated and eager to stay.

Ask yourself the following questions:

Are you inspiring your team? Are you giving people tough assignments, challenging them, and pushing them to go past the status quo so that they can continue to grow? When you grant employees the autonomy to execute projects by enabling them with the right skill set, a collaborative and inspiring culture is born. That's why today's leadership development solutions must focus on teaching the right skills to the right individual in the right way, so that they are given the best opportunity to advance to their truest potential.

Is there a defined career development path? People who can see a defined career path in their company are much more likely to stick around. Offering leadership development opportunities is one way to show employees that you care about their long-term growth and are invested in their success. There needs to be a continuous conversation about career paths and aspirations. Identify what opportunities employees are seeking in their current role and give them room to practice new skills while being supported. This combination allows employees to reflect on their learning and simultaneously strive to perform better in their roles.

THREE TIPS TO TAKE LEADERS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Employing successful leadership development really boils down to understanding how the brain learns in order to create learning environments that are more effective, empowering, and engaging. Recognize, however, that it's an ongoing learning

THREE TIPS TO TAKE LEADERS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

ASSESS OBJECTIVELY

EXPLORE NEW PLATFORMS

GIVE AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK

process. No leaders were born overnight, and oversight is critical to ensuring an optimal outcome. Following three simple steps will help take your leaders to the next level:

Assess objectively. Professional objective assessments are a valuable tool for leadership development. They provide insights into employees' personal preferences and how they might react in certain situations. For example, if someone is driven by money and power, they will do things very differently than if they are motivated by a cause. Recognizing these traits can help you to better define a personalized leadership experience that will result in true growth versus a "one size fits all" approach.

Explore new platforms. We know so much more about the human brain than we used to, including how short a typical attention span is. We know that our brains need sleep to help us "store" information for later recollection. We must provide boosters and regular triggers after training to enhance memory recall, and we know that tying new information to existing knowledge will help it stick. By taking advantage of technology-based leadership development platforms like Vayability, which apply valuable insights from neuroscience, we can help learners achieve long-lasting impact.

Give and receive feedback. Leaders learn and grow from continuous feedback, not just during training but also in the support they should receive afterward. When provided

frequently, feedback sheds light on what behaviors they should continue doing, stop doing, or start doing. Feedback is, however, a two-way street. Employers should likewise be receptive to receiving input from their leaders throughout the development process to continue to refine and improve future leadership training content and approaches for others.

TURN TRENDS INTO ACTION

Keeping these trends in mind, it's important to evaluate leadership development programs carefully. When selecting a program, look for certain attributes that are geared to today's learners, such as personalized rather than classroom training, the application of neuroscience to cultivate long-term habits, and on-demand platforms that make learning accessible. Couple online training with live coaching, and give leaders the opportunity to practice new skills in a safe environment with continuous support. Be sure that your leadership development program offers the ability to capture measurable outcomes to prove ROI. If these key components are included, you can be sure that your leadership development program is on the cutting edge of what's new and next. AQ

Paul Eccher, PhD, president and CEO of Vaya Group, has more than 25 years of experience partnering with Fortune 500 clients to leverage talent to achieve improved business results.

AMA's International Presence
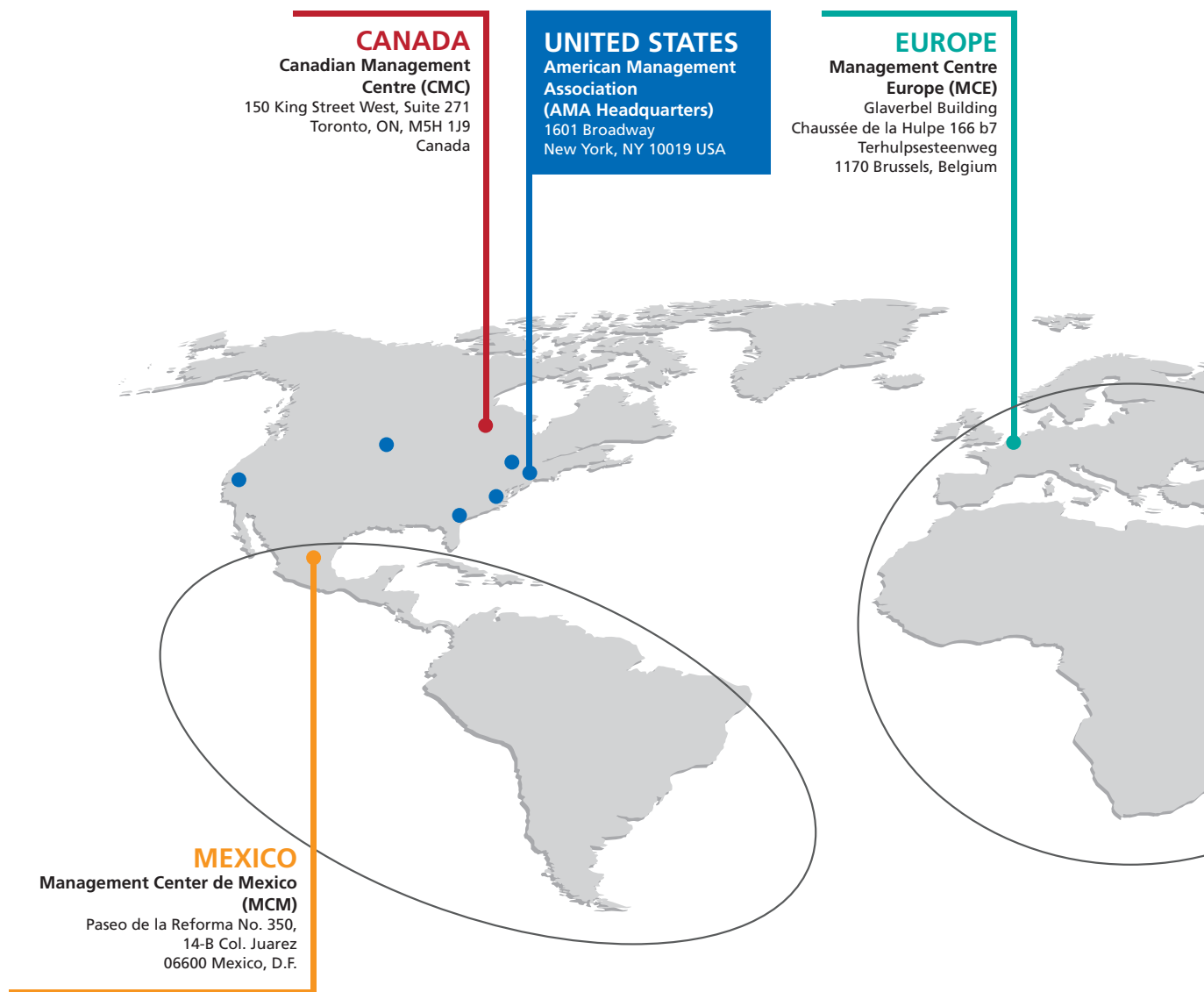
CANADA
Canadian Management
Centre (CMC)
150 King Street West, Suite 271
Toronto, ON, M5H 1J9
Canada

UNITED STATES
American Management
Association
(AMA Headquarters)
1601 Broadway
New York, NY 10019 USA

EUROPE
Management Centre
Europe (MCE)
Glaverbel Building
Chaussée de la Hulpe 166 b7
Terhulpsesteenweg
1170 Brussels, Belgium

MEXICO
Management Center de Mexico
(MCM)
Paseo de la Reforma No. 350,
14-B Col. Juarez
06600 Mexico, D.F.

MEXICO
Jorge Perez-Rubio
+52 55 3098 3300
info@amamex.org.mx
www.amamex.org.mx

CANADA
Geoff Blackwell
+1 416 214 5678
cmcinfo@cmcoutperform.com
www.cmcoutperform.com

UNITED STATES
Manny Avramidis
President & Chief
Executive Officer
+1 212 586 8100
info@amanet.org
www.amanet.org

EUROPE
Patrick Faniel
+32 2 543 2100
+32 2 543 2400
info@mce.eu
mce.eu

MALAYSIA
Sharifah Rafidah
Licensee
+60 36205 4818
solution@imperialconsulting.com
imperialconsulting.com

VIETNAM
Ha Pham
Licensee
+844 3632 1929
vietnam@trainocate.com
trainocate.com

VIETNAM
12F TNR Tower
115 Tran Hung Dao Street
Hoan Kiem District
Hanoi, Vietnam

INDONESIA
The H Tower, 17th Floor, Suite D
Jalan HR Rasuna Said Kav. 20
(next to Pasar Festival)
Jakarta Selatan, DKI Jakarta 12940
Indonesia

MALAYSIA
B4-6-6 Solaris Dutamas
Jalan Dutamas 1
50480 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

CHINA
Room 2805, Capital Square
268 Hengtong Road
Jingan District
Shanghai, China

JAPAN
19F Sumitomo Fudosan
Shinjuku Oak Tower, 6-8-1 Nishishinjuku
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 1636019
Japan

THAILAND
999/9 The Offices at CentralWorld
16th Floor
Unit ML 1606, Rama 1 Road
Patumwan, Bangkok 10330 Thailand

SINGAPORE
8 Cross Street
PWC Building, Level 28
Singapore 048424

PHILIPPINES
19/F Philippine AXA Life Centre
Sen. Gil. Puyat Ave.
Makati City, Metro Manila
Philippines

INDONESIA
Ronny Kurniawan
Licensee
+62 21 295 33 333
indonesia@trainocate.com
trainocate.com

CHINA
Peter Kao
Licensee
+86 21 5164 7188
+86 400 101 8877
marketing@amachina.com
www.amachina.com

SINGAPORE
Alfred Chan
Licensee
+65 6332 2330
solution@quintegral.com
quintegral.com

THAILAND
Jaruwan Laptrakool
Licensee
+66 2 613 1033
thailand@trainocate.com
trainocate.com

JAPAN
Yohei Kato
Licensee
+81 03 3347 9740
info@quintegral.co.jp
amajapan.co.jp

PHILIPPINES
Kristine Santayana
Licensee
+632 845 1324
solution@quintegral.com
quintegral.com

Psychological
Safety
WHY IT MATTERS

BY PRIYA KAUL

Psychological safety is becoming an increasingly popular term, referenced in numerous white papers and other literature about talent and team management.

It is not, however, a new concept. It was introduced in 1965 by E.H. Schein and W.G. Bennis in *Personal and Organizational Change Through Group Methods: The Laboratory Approach* (Wiley). Amy Edmondson, in more recent times, has become almost synonymous with psychological safety as a result of her 1999 study that looked at the relationship between psychological safety and high-performing teams. Google's Project Aristotle, the results of which were highlighted by the *New York Times* in 2016, also identified the composition of psychological safety.

Simply put, psychological safety describes an environment that makes someone feel comfortable voicing their ideas without any fear of retribution. The concept could be challenging if not carefully interpreted. But to increase psychological safety in a team, we cannot discount the value of a small degree of discomfort and challenge needed to push boundaries toward breakthroughs, innovation, and growth.

THE REVIVAL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

So, why is psychological safety suddenly taking center stage?

When whispers of an illness that produced shortness of breath, flu-like symptoms, and death made their way to WHO and CDC in December 2019 and we found ourselves in a global pandemic in early 2020, the world stood still, forcing all of us to pause and recalibrate both life and work.

As the pandemic started to recede, many of us quickly realized what giant technical organizations had found in the early 2000s when hiring. These companies had already been leveraging technology to hire the best talent across the world. When the pandemic hit, their employees were used to working in geographically dispersed teams. And companies found that one of the benefits of hybrid work practices was increased revenue. The pandemic further brought into focus technology-driven virtual and hybrid work practices and approaches. This was now a reality most industries had to accept.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we collectively experienced challenges such as the Great Resignation, stretched roles, a paucity of relevant talent for newly defined roles, and increased employee psychological concerns. All of this led to an increased focus on how companies retain and engage talent, and how to pivot to constant and rapid change. As we were rapidly restructuring and reimagining our work, organizations all over the world started shaping teams differently. As we

navigate this business climate, psychological safety becomes crucial to enhance employee engagement and team productivity. A 2017 Gallup report indicated that productivity increased by 12% when organizations increased psychological safety, as that enhanced employee engagement.

TODAY'S NEED FOR WORKPLACE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

In all the interviews I have conducted since mid-2021, whether it was for the position of an intern, manager, or consultant, a question that loomed on the interviewee's mind concerned the purpose and value of the role, work, and/or organization. A workforce that values different things than previous workforces seems to be paving the way forward, looking beyond salary and benefits to contributions, purpose, respect, and value at work. There appears to be a shift in what people are looking for and a shift in what employee engagement actually looks like.

There are many reasons why psychological safety is important to employee engagement. For one, psychologically safe teams are seen as inclusive—not only the inclusion of self but the inclusion of ideas. People feel valued when their ideas are treated with respect and they have a voice. Some ways to keep team members engaged are to include their ideas, experiences, diversity of academic thought, and approach. Inclusion promotes value and fosters psychological safety.

As we read literature on increasing inclusion by encouraging ideas, it brings into focus vulnerability. Sharing thoughts and ideas is not always a comfortable experience for all people on a team. Increasing individual self-efficacy is one way of reducing vulnerability. Social persuasion, which is encouragement or discouragement from another individual, is seen as important in the self-efficacy theory described by Stanford University's Albert Bandura. According to this theory, self-efficacy is increased when employees are more confident, as a result of being offered positive encouragement in voicing their initiatives or even concerns.

Studies also reveal that psychologically safe spaces are shown to promote proactive behaviors in people working in organizations. One 2020 study by Şeyhmus Aksoy and Nihal Mamatoğlu, *Mediator Role of Professional Self-Efficacy Belief Between Psychological Safety and Self-Reported Personal Initiative*, found that psychological safety was seen to be positively correlated with self-reported personal initiative.

As leaders, we have an opportunity to be intentional about increasing psychological safety in our teams and organizations. Studies stress the importance of supportive environments where people can voice their ideas, thoughts, and questions respectfully. Empowering teams by increasing self-efficacy may encourage more proactive problem solving and innovative solutions particularly crucial in a business climate of uncertainty and rapid change.

Finally, it is vital that psychological safety does not remain a checkbox or buzzword and that we create a more intentional, purpose-driven team environment for talent to stay engaged. AQ

Priya Kaul is Director, Learning Solutions, for American Management Association.

Review Your Thoughts, Actions, and Impact

BY THOMAS EPPERSON

How often do you pause to learn?

If you're like most people, you probably think about what happened during the day—maybe on your ride home, maybe at home with your spouse or your friends, maybe in the middle of the night when you are trying to sleep but can't seem to turn your brain off.

However, just thinking about what happened during the day, and probably beating yourself up about it, is not learning. That takes an additional step: reflection.

Athletes, actors, and musicians record their performances and watch the tape. They look at their performance and make notes about what they can do to improve. Some organizations and military groups use an after-action report as a way to debrief what happened, what they learned, and how they want to apply those lessons in the future.

This act of reflection—a pause before moving on to the next thing—gives us a chance to grow from our experiences. This is especially important for leaders, because it's one of the best tools available to us if we want to learn from our successes, learn from our mistakes, and learn from the example of others.

Ultimately, to get the most out of the lessons that life teaches us, you must reflect. You must review your thoughts, actions, and impact. How do you do that? By asking yourself four key questions.

REASONS FOR SELF-REVIEW

Why is it important to review our thoughts, actions, and impact? First of all, our actions impact others, whether we recognize it or not. Our actions can lift others up, leaving them inspired and standing a bit taller, or we can knock them down, leaving them feeling hurt or more diminished than we found them.

We don't have to end up in the principal's office to be reminded that our actions have consequences. The question is not just what impact do we want to have on other people, but what impact are we actually having?

Not only do our actions have an impact, but our thoughts do as well. Our thoughts and emotional responses to an event influence the choices we make, which influence the actions we take, which result in an impact. Our thoughts and resulting actions have an impact in the moment and over time.

To realize our potential, we must pause a little more. That gives us space to make a few more conscious choices that align with the impact we want to have on others. Make those choices over a lifetime, and imagine the impact you could have.

YOUR THOUGHTS MATTER

Our thoughts can be a source of emotional well-being. When my thinking grows negative and I think everything is terrible and everyone is evil and the universe has it in for me, that is a good sign that I'm burned out or tired or hungry. In these situations, my negative thoughts can spiral out of control.

When we review our thoughts, actions, and impact, we want to reflect on what is going on for us. In a mindfulness practice such as meditation, we might notice our thoughts and nonjudgmentally allow them to pass.

In other cases, we may mentally discipline ourselves to stop our negative thinking. According to Dr. Jacques Dallaire, our conscious minds have a great deal of influence over our unconscious minds. Rather than focusing on all the things we can't control, he recommends that in the moment, we focus on what is under our control, including our thoughts. When you

have a negative thought, Dallaire recommends redirecting it to something you can impact.

When we focus too much on the things we can't control and we begin to feel stress, our view narrows. We begin to miss things in the wide view that may be incredibly important. If we are not reviewing our thoughts, actions, and impact, we might not realize we are too narrow or too wide at the wrong times.

ASK YOURSELF FOUR QUESTIONS

There are many ways to review our thoughts, actions, and impact. Some people like to reflect on their drive home. Some like to reflect while they are doing an activity that does not need a lot of mental horsepower, like folding laundry or mowing the lawn.

However and whenever you choose to reflect, you can ask yourself several questions to help guide and frame your reflection:

1. What did you do? Did your actions align with your values? With your purpose?

2. What did you think and feel? (Remember, strong emotions reflect our deepest held values and give us insight into, well, us.)

> "My brain works better when I engage with others. Coaches are a great resource for this, as are people who nonjudgmentally listen and reflect what they hear."

3. What impact did you have? Did the impact align with what you want to achieve in the moment and over time?

4. How might you act more aligned with what you have identified as your purpose in life and your core values?

Some people love to journal as they consider these questions. Sit down with a piece of paper, or a computer, or a fancy spiral notebook and take notes on what happened. What did you do? How did you respond to others?

Another technique is simply to notice your thoughts, feelings, and actions throughout the day and describe them in your journal. Once you have amassed a few weeks of data, go through it to look for trends. It's a great way to build your skill of mindfulness, to notice what you are thinking and feeling at any given moment. By noticing our habits of mind, we can consciously choose our thoughts versus unconsciously allowing those thoughts to run roughshod over us.

OTHER WAYS TO REFLECT

Of course, there are other ways to reflect. Some people keep a pad beside their bed so when they wake up in the middle of the night with a thought or a fear or a to-do, they can jot it down and go back to dreamland.

I am not one of those people. If I start writing, I won't stop until daylight when I get up and go to work. I have a more extroverted method of reflecting: talking to other people and reflecting out loud. My brain works better when I engage with others who can help me sort through my thoughts and emotions and nonjudgmentally help me recognize my own thinking.

Coaches are a great resource for this, as are people who nonjudgmentally listen and reflect what they hear. So often when we engage others, we try to solve their problems or tell them what they should do, or we tsk and harrumph and judge, but when we have really good listeners, they help us reflect.

FIND A TECHNIQUE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

To review your thoughts, actions, and impact, find a technique that works for you. If having a pretty journal filled with inspirational quotes is your thing, do it. If you'd rather start a blog, do so. If you'd rather talk to other people and take a few notes, great.

My wife is a graphic recorder and facilitator, so she draws pictures as a way of reflecting on her thoughts, actions, and impact. That works, because it gives her a chance to reflect. Long story short, be ruthlessly pragmatic in your reflection: Do what works for you. AQ

Thomas Epperson is the president of InnerWill Leadership Institute, a 501(c)3 nonprofit that has helped organizations actualize potential, maximize performance and elevate impact. With a doctorate in leadership from The George Washington University and over 20 years of experience as a leadership coach, facilitator, and speaker, he has helped more than 300 organizations transform their leadership.

Adapted from InnerWill: Developing Better People, Braver Leaders, and a Wiser World Through the Practice of Values Based Leadership. *Copyright 2022, Thomas Epperson.*

What's So New About
CORPORATE STRATEGY
in the Innovation Era?

BY MOSTAFA SAYYADI

Strategy and innovation are the two pillars of success for a post-pandemic recovery.

"What does the post-pandemic corporate world look like?"

Well, you are in it now. As an international management consultant, I am seeing these things happening now: better-managed desk spaces, rightsizing, restructured workweeks, and a talent age gap as many seasoned executives, and the career devoted, decide to retire. And I am predicting that all of these trends will continue. This all begs the question: Does remote work get the job done? The right formula for the post-pandemic world is a sweet spot that keeps people engaged but allows some freedom as they work from remote locations. Corporate strategy and innovation are now the two pillars of business success to move an organization to post-pandemic recovery.

This article presents some beneficial managerial implications for executives and simply extends the current business literature by showing how executives can implement an effective corporate strategy aimed at improving organizational innovation. Innovative strategic approaches will help companies innovate and survive. And the organizations that can develop more effective corporate strategies will survive. Particularly, executives can build a suitable workplace for better implementing corporate strategy by facilitating the four strategic dimensions of analysis, proactiveness, defensiveness, and futurity. I suggest that executives from across the globe can make the effective changes that are posited in the four dimensions of corporate strategy.

WHAT IS CORPORATE STRATEGY?

Any organization has plans going well into the future. Strategic goals span five to fifteen years, while short-term goals are more tactical and just as important. Two prominent strategic management scholars, Charles Hofer and Dan Schendel, in their book *Strategy Formulation: Analytical Concepts*, see strategy as a fundamental pattern of present and planned resource deployments and environmental interactions that indicate how the organization will achieve its objectives.

Another scholar, Kenneth Andrews, in his book *The Concept of Corporate Strategy*, describes strategy as a pattern of decisions and plans that are directed at interacting with the external and internal environment and allocating capabilities effectively and efficiently to achieve organizational objectives. The strategy primarily aims to develop goals and plans to restructure unclear and vague situations into a set of organizationally resolvable problems. As a result, a strategy is formed to efficiently deploy capabilities and interact with environments—both internal and external. There are different types of strategies, and one of these can create better results for organizational innovation when compared to others.

HOW DOES CORPORATE STRATEGY WORK?

N. Venkat Venkatraman, an author and scholar in the area of strategic management at Boston University, in his article "Strategic Orientation of Business Enterprises: The Construct, Dimensionality, and Measurement," outlines the dimensions of corporate strategy and recommends the four strategic dimensions of analysis, proactiveness, defensiveness, and futurity.

Analysis strategy is defined as the tendency to search for problems and their root causes, and generate better alternatives to solve them. When executives analyze strategy, they can create more knowledge and find the best solution by using a problematic search of various options. This strategy

stimulates companies to apply information systems in their decision-making processes to investigate various alternatives and options.

According to Wei Zheng, Baiyin Yang, and Gary McLean, in their article "Linking Organizational Culture, Structure, Strategy, and Organizational Effectiveness: Mediating Role of Knowledge Management," executives also analyze strategic milestones to meet the goals of employee development. Analysis strategy can develop opportunities for employee development through assessing current situations in detail. This strategy provides new and more innovative solutions for organizational problems as they arise.

Proactiveness is a strategy element used by executives who take a proactive approach to search for better positions in the business environment. As executives use the proactiveness strategy, which refers to finding new opportunities and proactively responding to current challenges in external environments, they can enhance their span of control. In many ways, this strategy could enhance knowledge transfer by developing interactions with both departmental units and the business environment.

Defensiveness recommends undertaking defensive behaviors that will enhance efficiency and cut costs while maintaining continuous budget analysis and break-even points. While executives can take an offensive strategy, in this case, they employ a defensive strategy. A defensive strategy utilizes modifications in order to efficiently and effectively use organizational resources, decrease costs, and control operational risk. Some executives feel that a defensive strategy, while necessary, sets a negative connotation on their span of control. A defensiveness strategic approach, in fact, enhances organizational learning through the reuse of commercial knowledge.

Futurity is reflected in the degree to which the strategic decision-making process takes a two-way approach—an emphasis on both long-term effectiveness and shorter-term efficiency concurrently. Executives use futurity strategy to expand the growth opportunities available to a company to close the gap between success and failure. Futurity strategy implements basic studies to identify and actively respond to changes that occurred in the external environment and provides better outcomes. When adopting a futurity strategy, executives can enhance the process of knowledge utilization, develop guidelines for future pathways and determine future trends in the external environment, and allocate their resources accordingly.

HOW TO DO IT RIGHT

To develop analysis strategy, executives can develop a workplace in which there is/are:

- Emphasis on effective coordination among different functional areas

- Extensive use of information systems to support decision making
- Comprehensive analysis undertaken when confronted with an important decision
- Use of planning techniques
- Effective deployment of management information and control systems
- Use of manpower planning and performance appraisal of senior managers

To cultivate proactiveness strategy, executives can develop a workplace in which there is/are:

- Constant search for new opportunities
- Attempt to introduce new brands or products in the market
- Constant search for businesses that can be acquired
- More effective expansion of capacities when compared to our competitors
- Strategic elimination of those operations that are no longer profitable in later stages of lifecycles

To foster defensive strategy, executives can develop a workplace in which there is/are:

- Regular modifications to the manufacturing/service technology
- Use of cost control systems for monitoring performance
- Use of current management techniques to ensure that we move smoothly at the required level
- Emphasis on product/service quality through the use of work improvement teams

To create futurity strategy, executives can develop a workplace in which there is/are:

- Specific criteria used for resource allocation which generally reflect short-term considerations
- Emphasis on basic research to provide us with a competitive edge for the future
- Key indicators of operations forecasted
- Formal tracking of significant and general trends
- Regular analyses of critical issues

In this article, I've outlined practical applications for executives to create effective corporate strategies, so that organizations will innovate, survive, prosper, and live to see new horizons. By channeling organizational processes into corporate strategy and employing a supportive strategy, executives can help companies continue to prosper. Executives can see how they can cultivate an effective corporate strategy, which can enable organizational innovation to achieve business objectives and satisfy careers. AQ

Mostafa Sayyadi works with senior business leaders to effectively develop innovation in companies, and helps companies—from start-ups to the Fortune 100—succeed by improving the effectiveness of their leaders. He is a book author and a longtime contributor to business publications.

Ask Once for What You Want

And You Will Get It 50% of the Time

BY NABIL FANOUS

If you do not assert yourself when opportunities arise, you won't have your needs met. Just ask.

You go out with your spouse for dinner. As you follow the restaurant hostess, you notice two nice empty tables. But the hostess leads you to the absolute worst table possible—sandwiched between the kitchen doors and the entrance to the restrooms.

Yet, not only do you accept her choice, but you even thank her for it. And for the next two hours, you endure a thoroughly disagreeable atmosphere—the revolving kitchen doors on your left and the restroom traffic on your right.

But why did you accept that table? Why didn't you ask the hostess for one of the two better tables? And why did you even thank her?

Why didn't you assert yourself? Is it because you didn't want to cause a scene? Or you wanted to fit in and please people?

IF YOU DON'T ASK, YOU DON'T GET!

I understand that you may not want to act like those obnoxious, pushy, loud restaurant patrons. However, you don't have to be the person who is too resigned to argue or too polite to ask—the doormat.

I suggest a simple compromise: Ask—just once—for what you want.

By asking once, you're not begging, and neither are you being aggressive. You won't be stressed about being perceived as too demanding, nor will you chastise yourself later for being too polite.

You're simply asking a question, and you're only asking once. Whether it's a discount, a favor, a nicer hotel room, a better deal, a more convenient flight, or a date, start by asking for what you want—once—even if you think your chances of getting it are slim.

So even if you're shy or tend to be a people pleaser, ask once for what you want in life, and there is a good chance that you may get it or some version of it.

Stevie Wonder didn't wonder when he said, "If you don't ask, you don't get." And as self-help author Peter McWilliams reasoned, "Learn to ask for what you want. The worst people can do is not give you what you ask for, which is precisely where you were before you asked!"

YOU REALLY HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE

You may not get all of what you want, but occasionally, you may get some of it. That's still a plus.

Finally, if you have a little extra courage, you may even go ahead and ask—twice!

However, when you do so, your odds of getting what you want will only go up a little.

There are five smart ways of asking for what you want:

Keep it short. The longer your sentence, the less persuasive it is, because it may give the impression that you're hesitating.

Keep it realistic. Getting what you're asking for will only be possible if your requests are achievable. As Goethe suggested, "If you want a wise answer, ask a reasonable question."

Open with effective words, such as "I would like" or "Can I." Starting with an "I" establishes your assertiveness.

Keep your demeanor friendly. If you're politely self-assured, it's more likely that the world will give you what you ask for.

And keep quiet once you have asked for what you want. If you keep talking, you will give the other person enough time to formulate an excuse for not complying with your wishes.

GUIDELINES FOR ASKING

Here are some suggestions for openers in various situations:

If you want a discount, ask, "Could I have a better price?"

If you want a service, you could ask, "Can I check out at 4 p.m. instead of 11 a.m.?" (Even if the hotel lets you stay only until noon, you're still better off.)

If you want to socialize, "hi" is still the best, easiest, simplest, shortest, and smartest opener ever—whether at a cocktail party, a professional gathering, or an encounter in an elevator. "How are you?" is second best.

WHEN ASKING ONCE ISN'T ENOUGH

Asking once will get you what you want around 50% of the time. That's good enough for your everyday needs.

But if what you want is of great importance to you, then asking once won't cut it. For example:

• If you want to place an offer on a home you really adore

• If you need a loan to save your company from bankruptcy

• If you want to pursue an intimate relationship with someone who you believe could be the love of your life

> "When not getting it would be an unbearable blow to you, then settling for just a 50% chance of success is out of the question. But what do you think would be the maximum number of times you could ask?"
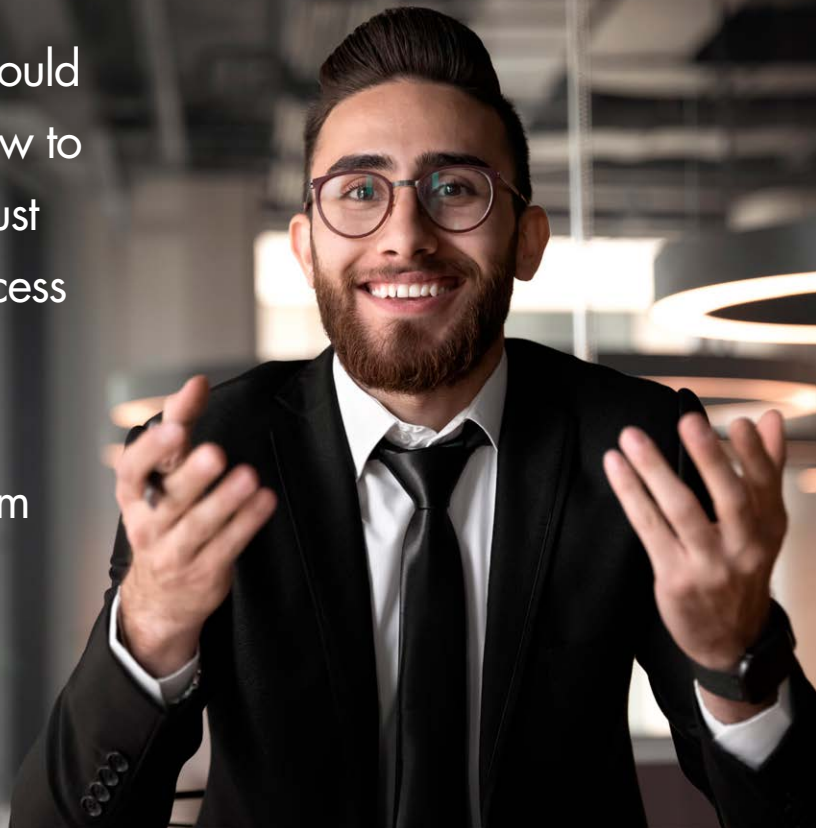
• If you want your siblings to help you look after a sick parent

In all such cases, when you're desperate for what you want, and when not getting it would be an unbearable blow to you, then settling for just a 50% chance of success is out of the question.

Under such circumstances, you don't have a choice but to keep asking. But what do you think would be the maximum number of times you could ask?

A "COLONEL" STORY

In the 1930s, Harland Sanders, owner of a service station, discovered a recipe for fried chicken and started serving some to his customers. His reputation and his clientele grew until a highway was built through his Kentucky town and traffic on his road dwindled.

The poor Colonel, as he was called, went broke. He was desperate and needed a partner. So he drove his car around for weeks, stopping at various restaurants to look for the right business partner.

He was rejected repeatedly, but he kept asking because he couldn't afford not to get what he wanted. Finally, he succeeded in finding a partner who accepted his proposal.

But how many times do you think Colonel Sanders had to ask for what he wanted? Ten times? Twenty? One hundred?

No—a thousand times!

Because for Sanders, it was a matter of life and death. He couldn't take no for an answer. And from then on, the Colonel's Kentucky Fried Chicken chain became an international enterprise grossing billions of dollars.

What about you? When desperate, how many times could you ask for what you want?

It's simple. The more desperate you are, the more times you will end up asking! AQ

Nabil Fanous, MD, is a surgeon, a university teacher, and a speaker at major international medical conferences. He is presently chief of the Division of Facial and Reconstructive Surgery and associate professor at the Department of Head and Neck Surgery for McGill University in Montreal. Dr. Fanous is the author of The Universal Rules of Life: 27 Secrets for Managing Time, Stress, and People *(Forefront Books, 2022).*

Bringing Lightness to Leadership

BY JODY MICHAEL

Sometimes you can't put your finger on exactly what you want.

You're trying to make a decision, or determine a direction, or make some kind of change for the better. You search deep inside yourself for clarity, but what you want seems elusive, murky, out of reach. However, you're very clear about one thing: You know what you don't want. In fact, you might have quite the list: problems, people, situations—stress of all kinds. Feelings of frustration, anxiety, or sadness. You just don't want any of that anymore.

If you're a leader in today's world, you might have come to a place within yourself where leadership feels like the same difficult grind, day after day, a mix of stress, overload, and exhaustion. You wonder what could change to make it better. Is change even possible? You ask yourself if this is what leadership is and will always be.

There is an alternative. It's called leading lightly.

THE BASICS OF LEADING LIGHTLY

The funny thing about leading lightly is that in many ways, it's easier to explain what it's not than what it is. That's because leading lightly is a particular way of being—a mood, an energy, a frame of mind—that is quite rare in leadership and among people in general. Yet, it is very attainable. And it is my sincere hope that leading lightly will turn out to be exactly what you want.

So, let's start with what leading lightly is not. It is not crashing through your day or just going through the motions in suboptimal states of stress, overload, anxiety, or frustration. It is not struggling through ongoing feelings of heaviness, burden, resignation, or burnout. It is not carrying your stress home with you or taking it out on your innocent significant other. It is not fantasizing about quitting your job and running away forever.

What does it mean to lead lightly?

Leading lightly means that no matter what happens during your day, you have the capacity to approach everything with enduring ease and clarity. It is a state of being that naturally arises when you have learned to let go of your internal noise and emotional clutter.

If you think about light or lightness, or moving lightly in any context, you can taste a little of the flavor of leading lightly: It's being light on your feet. Light in your mood or lighthearted. Looking from a well-lit perspective. Having a light touch.

Leading Lightly: A Spiritual Perspective

Most spiritual traditions agree that there is something greater than ourselves at play, something much more expansive and mysterious than the human mind can fathom. "Light" is one of the many names for this, along with consciousness, God, Source, energy, and so on (even "that which cannot be named"). If you are spiritually inclined, then you can understand leading lightly to mean loosening the entrancement of your ego in order to allow more conscious connection or alignment with this greater unseen intelligence or organizing principle.

A spiritual perspective often holds that there is more going on than what we can perceive; that there is something bigger happening in any situation than what our human brain can interpret. The aperture of life is understood to be much wider than the localized impact of any given moment.

From a spiritual lens, leading lightly means getting out of your own way, allowing unfoldment, accepting "what is," trusting in what you can't see, letting go of being right, and receiving the gifts that life itself offers to you. Connecting with universal consciousness in this way, you have access to a deep knowing. You can surf the waves, be in the flow, operate more elegantly, make better decisions, help others get through the storm. In other words, you can lead much more effectively.

Turning a lightbulb on. If you're spiritually inclined, then leading lightly is also about the light of a greater consciousness (see box).

LEADING LIGHTLY IN THE WORKPLACE

In the work setting, leading lightly means that you have the cognitive and emotional (and spiritual) capacity to deal with whatever leadership challenges are brought to you. You're almost effortlessly effective in each moment with your conversations, relationships, decisions, and other actions. You choose your responses with a sense of mindfulness; you're not reactive. You emanate a kind of rare receptivity and have a capacity to metabolize the negative, so that you're not pulled or weighed down.

With each thing that happens, even situations unfamiliar to you, you have an abiding feeling that "you've got this." You're honed and masterful in moving with what's happening. It's not hard for you to know the right thing to do, because you feel it with an unmistakable clarity inside yourself.

Is this a pipe dream? Pollyanna? Something that only a Zen master could hope to attain? I get it. Being able to lead lightly sure would be great—and so would winning the lottery. If you have your doubts, I understand that. As I said, there aren't many people walking around, at least in a corporate setting, who are leading lightly.

But that doesn't mean it can't be done. Most people aren't even aware that it's possible. They believe, on some level, that stress and difficulty are just inevitable. However, if you can think otherwise, you'll learn that even your current doubts are themselves elements of the noise and clutter that are obscuring what's actually been available to you all along.

Leading lightly comes about from a transformational process that I call MindMastery. It's a way of discovering, and then shedding, the hidden beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives that create your perceptual lens and underlying operating system. It's not about adding anything new. It's about understanding how your own unconscious thoughts cause you to react in habitual ways that create unnecessary pain, stress, and suffering.

You might ask, Why, if leading lightly is so great, isn't there more of it in the world? Why would something so beneficial be so rare? It's because there is a kind of unconscious wall that every individual must break through, much like the fourth wall in theater. It's as if we are actors in a play on a stage, but we don't know that about ourselves.

We don't even imagine that there's any other way to go through life. We react to everything from a kind of limited script and perspective. It's only when someone from the outside—the observers in the audience, so to speak—helps us break that wall and see from a different perspective that we can begin to create something completely different. We may choose to stay on the same stage, perhaps, but we have a different experience altogether. AQ

Jody Michael is CEO of Jody Michael Associates, a premier coaching company specializing in executive coaching, leadership development, and career coaching. She is recognized as one of the top 4% of coaches worldwide and is an internationally credentialed Master Certified Coach, Board Certified Coach, University of Chicago trained psychotherapist, and Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

Good Leaders Understand Relationships

BY JEFF BUCHANAN

What is the difference between management and leadership?

I ask this question as an icebreaker whenever I am teaching a class on leadership to grad school students. I use the question to get the students engaged and (hopefully) get their creative juices flowing. My question is not anecdotal—I call on at least five students every class to share their thoughts. I also assure them that I am not looking for a textbook definition, I just want to see what they think.

Some students take an easy path. Since they know that I am there to discuss leadership, they make an argument that management is "bad," while leadership is "good." When somebody inevitably goes in that direction, I remind them that some of history's most effective leaders have been truly evil people: Leadership is neither inherently good nor bad.

After I've been successful in getting a real discussion going, I share my thoughts, and it usually goes something like this: "In its simplest form, management is just making stuff happen. Leadership is influencing people to make stuff happen. You can add complexity to the definition with all sorts of qualifiers ranging from organizational goals to vision, but the key idea is this: People may be part of any management situation, but they are *the* critical component of any leadership equation. At its core, leadership is about people and relationships."

Wise leaders understand this idea and do everything they can to understand themselves and others. Better understanding leads to an increased potential for influence.

RELATIONSHIPS: THE CORE OF LEADERSHIP

I recently addressed the national convention of AMSUS, the Society of Federal Health Professionals, and my theme was all about people and the criticality of relationships in any leadership

situation. I even told the story of my relationship with then-Petty Officer Wayne "Doc" Bailey and how he tirelessly worked to save numerous lives during my second deployment to Iraq. Doc was the youngest member of our small team embedded with the Iraqi Special Police Commandoes, but he was easily the most valuable member. In addition to saving lives, Doc taught the commandoes lifesaving skills for combat, which could help them learn how to save lives when U.S. medical personnel were not present during a fight. His deep concern and care for those he served with inspires me to this day, nearly 20 years later. People are at the core of every leadership equation, and effective leaders understand that.

Relationships between you and your boss, your peers, and your clients are all important, and the techniques and styles you employ to have a meaningful influence on each group will differ. Relationships with your subordinates, however, may be the most critical. After all, it is that group who will be most affected by your leadership.

I have served with both good and bad leaders around the world, and have learned something valuable from every one of them. One generalization is evident: From the eyes of a subordinate, leaders who strive to lead by example are far more effective than those who don't. In contrast, those who say "Do as I say, not as I do" degrade morale and are not very effective, especially when lives are on the line.

It has also been my experience that it is pretty easy to fool the boss, much harder to fool one's peers, and virtually impossible to fool the subordinates. I have occasionally failed to see toxic behavior several levels down inside my organization, and only by spending time and energy at lower levels (doing what some proponents have called "management by walking around") did I

> "The next time you face a tough leadership challenge, think about the people you are trying to lead. What is their perspective? What motivates them? How can I best reach them in order to achieve the desired effect?"

learn what was happening. I have been fooled by brilliant results before, only to learn that they were achieved through the abuse of our troops.

TOXIC OR NOT?

I once had an employee (a medical operations planner) who was accused of being "toxic" by her subordinates. The accusation caught me by surprise since I thought that she was one of our best leaders. Mindful of my own history of occasionally misjudging my subordinate leaders, I decided to dig deep to find out what was happening. I questioned her and learned that she was both confused and devastated by the accusations—not the sort of reaction I'd expect from somebody who was truly toxic.

When I interviewed her employees, they consistently said that she gave them huge tasks near the end of the day with early-morning deadlines, forcing them to work late every night.

Back to my leader who was accused of being toxic. When I questioned her about her delegation and tasking behaviors, I learned a couple of key facts. First, she had an incredible work ethic, and missed meals with the family were (to her) not a big deal. Second, she initially gave a lot of latitude to her employees to figure out how to complete a task (which was positive), but then got around to marking up their work at the end of the day, saying she wanted it back the first thing in the morning. When I grilled her to find out what was important about the timing, I learned that there was nothing driving the early-morning deadline other than her need to get things done. She had a high need for achievement, and it gave her great satisfaction to make lists of things to do every day and then check them off once the tasks were completed.

The solution was simple. I coached her to ask her employees when they could deliver the corrected product and give them back ownership of the timing. If they responded with "next Tuesday," that was usually fine. If not, she could help them adjust. I also helped her understand that a missed family meal was a heck of a lot more important than she seemed to think. In the end, her employees were happy, our work was completed to standard, and I learned more about one of my key leaders. More important, she learned more about herself.

If I had not invested the time and effort to find out what was happening, I might have acted on the initial accusations, and all of us would have lost. Dig in and listen when you are seeking an explanation on a matter—you might learn something valuable.

The next time you face a tough leadership challenge, think about the people you are trying to lead. What is their perspective? What motivates them? How can I best reach them in order to achieve the desired effect? Once you have that understanding, plan your move and do it, realizing that the best technique for one group in one setting may fail in another context. This is why leadership is an art, as well as a science. The master leadership artists understand the criticality of people and relationships. Good luck in your leadership journey! AQ

LTG Jeff Buchanan commanded US Army North (Fifth Army), and after a 37-year Army career, he retired from active duty on Sept. 1, 2019. Upon retirement, he and his wife moved home to Patagonia, Ariz., where he consults from his home office. In addition to serving as a Senior Fellow for National Defense University's CAPSTONE and KEYSTONE programs, LTG Buchanan serves as a Senior Mentor for the Department of the Army.

YOUR GOAL IS SUCCESS

OURS IS HELPING YOU GET THERE

Drive strategy and results

The speed of change and uncertainty today makes professional development more crucial than ever. As the business world embraces new ways of learning, it also needs maximum value and impact—and solutions that take the need for trust and human connection into account.

AMA is the development partner you can trust for lasting impact and behavior change.

AMA learning strategies provide

- Assessment between current and future states, identifying positive business outcomes and the capabilities needed to achieve them

- Curated, tailored, experiential content that drives engagement

- Practical application of new skills, along with feedback and coaching

- Varying, blended experiences to enhance sustainability

- Evaluation of effectiveness and impact
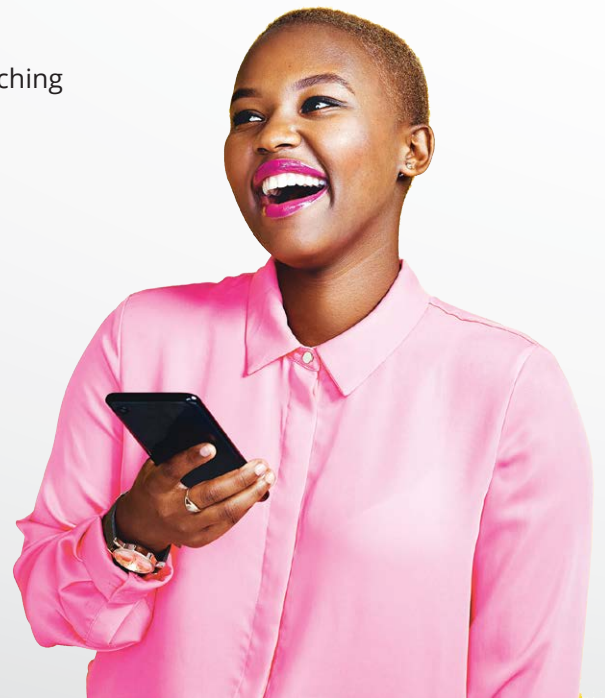
Achieve transformational change with expertly aligned learning solutions

So that each essential element of your development initiative is effectively implemented, AMA uses a comprehensive Engagement Matrix. With it, we outline the critical steps for communicating roles, responsibilities and processes—as well as execution strategies to ensure successful transfer of learning, skill development and behavior change.

AMA's curated content addresses the most critical competencies that highly successful organizations expect from their talent—and is aligned with the competencies in these four areas:

Professional Effectiveness	Relationship Management	Business Acumen	Analytical Intelligence

Engage in the learning experience that's right for your people

Organization/Team Experience—Instructor-led, interactive private sessions—examples, exercises and activities are tailored to an organization's strategy.

Individual Learner Experience—Learn with peers from different industries and organizations. Ideal for supplemental development and specific needs.

OnDemand Learning Experience—Support skill transfer with a curated collection of self-paced eLearning content to enable awareness, reinforcement, and sustainment.

Total Access License™—the content is ours, the agenda is yours.

This talent development strategy offers your subject matter experts both context and curation of AMA licensed content—providing ultimate flexibility to ensure the learning strategy meets your objectives.

877-880-0264
amanet.org/corporate-solutions

Inclusiveness should be more than just a policy

In fact, employees who feel their voice is heard are 4.6 times more likely to perform their best work.*

AMA's curated diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) content can help you build the equity, belonging and allyship needed to achieve true inclusion in your organization. Our instructor-led virtual and on demand solutions help you maximize reinforcement and sustainment—and are backed by AMA's expertise.

AMA can help you initiate or enhance a DEIB initiative and make inclusiveness a reality in your organization.

Call 877-880-0264 to learn more about our comprehensive packages now available.