

Three things leaders do to address today's challenges

Listen

Most of the time we don't really listen. We may wait politely until the other person is finished or feign interest while formulating our response. Otto Scharmer (2018) from the Presencing Institute at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology calls this downloading. When we can move to a higher level of listening, we can develop empathy for other perspectives and create spaces for innovation. Developing empathy allows you to create safe spaces for people to take risks, a basic requirement of innovation.

Paraphrase what you hear people saying. This gives you an opportunity to confirm your understanding and sends a signal to the other person that you really truly listening.

Engage in inquiry not advocacy. Set aside your preconceived opinions and listen as if you are coming from a place where you had no opinion.

Assume positive intent. Our brains are designed to see danger where there is no danger. This is an evolutionary holdover from thousands of years ago. It takes intentionality to set aside this automatic response and assume that what the other person is saying is not a threat to you.

Motivate

Many organizations reward staff with bonuses. But money is a short-term motivator. After the initial thrill of receiving the bonus wears off, performance drops. What does motivate people better than money? Acknowledging people (Ariely, D., 2016). The social contract is a stronger predictor of productivity than the transactional nature of a bonus. In addition to boosting productivity, because you are building relationships, you will improve your chances of solving the complex issues most of us face in our work.

Engage

If you want change to stick, engage your employees in the change process (Bridges, 2003), 2016). People support that which they help create. Think about how much you love your house. Yet when you sell it you might be surprised at the perspectives of potential buyers. While you think that blue bathroom is the best feature of the house, it may not excite them at all. Allow your employees to contribute their ideas and they will help you generate a more creative and effective change process.

References

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