Supervisors as Safety Leaders

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Conversation at Work!

Face-to-face communication is the most effective form of engagement.

Lots of research has shown us that supervisors are the most important link to employee engagement. In safety, they are the primary communicator and reinforcer of safety as a priority. They cannot play this important role effectively if they don't understand or believe in the importance of conversation and relationship building.

Conversation at Work! is our program constructed to help supervisors understand

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Practical Application
No trust = Poor communication = Failure

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Is an internationally recognized leader in the field of leadership and organization development. Invited as a keynote speaker from Bahrain to Latin and North America, she has designed and implemented leadership development programs for major corporate and government clients, including General Electric, Honeywell, NRC, World Bank, Altamed, Aramco, Exxon-Mobil, Southern California Edison, Johnson & Johnson, UC Berkley, and Lawrence Livermore Laboratories. In addition, as president of Carrillo & Associates, Inc., Carrillo works as a management consultant with family owned businesses. Through effective and inspirational management coaching, Carrillo outlines fresh approaches to improving productivity, enabling the progress of diversity, and boosting the bottom line.

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Without trust, open communication cannot exist; lack of communication leads to organizational failure.

Most mistrust is a result of managers making decisions based on the material evidence they see such as cost, quality, time equipment, behavior or output.

Low trust and blocked communication are due to management's failure to pay sufficient attention to relationships and it's close companion, power.

Relationships and power influence the emotions, feelings and thinking that ultimately determine how people choose to behave. Working below the water line requires much more effort than above and results are not immediately measurable. This creates more resistance to working with the very elements that will improve trust and communication levels.

Face-to-face communication, conversation and dialogue are the tools to manage relationships and influence power and politics.

Building the trust necessary to maintain the free flow of information needed to run a successful organization is a permanent task and

challenge. Conversation and face-to-face communication are the primary means of influence. Trust is rooted in both the interpersonal dimension, the culture and is primarily influenced by power and politics.

The *Trust and Open Communication (TOC) Iceberg* is a metaphor for the relative importance for managing the visible and invisible aspects of an organization. The tip of the iceberg, the visible aspects, typically receives the most attention because they are concrete and easier to measure. However the invisible aspects pose a much larger threat when not managed properly. Managers receive very little education in these areas, thus tend to be more uncomfortable managing them. This can result in organizational failure, as the more powerful dynamics go unmanaged.

TOC ICEBERG

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Defining the Law of Relationship

People are motivated to act based on their perceptions and self-interests.

Ralph Stacey (Director of the Complexity and Management Centre, Business School of the University of Hertfordshire), after years of study arrived at the conclusion that organizational results stem from the interactions and communications between individuals and among groups. He calls this field of thought "Relationship Psychology," and it rocks the foundation of popular approaches to behavioral or cultural change because it takes the focus away from individuals to organizational relationships in all of its forms. This means human interaction is the primary influencer in organizations. It says that systems such as rewards, measurements, or rules do not control outcomes. Instead, outcomes are influenced by 1) the human tendency for self-interest and relating everything to their own experience, 2) conversations that shape people's understanding of what is true and what is appropriate action (although sometimes the conversation takes place silently within), and 3) the radical unpredictability of the direction in which connections and relationships evolve. (Stacey: *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics*, 2007*)*

The "law of relationship" is to organizations what the law of gravity is to the planetary system. It keeps order for continued survival. A successful leader acknowledges and works in accord with this law.

why these elements are so important and how they affect an element they know to be quite important—the levels of trust and open communication in the workplace.

Our courses begin with the idea that there isn't really a difference between success in organizations and success in life. Both require a certain amount of trust in people and most of all in ourselves.

Instead of trust, most of us are taught a certain self-protectiveness that we carry into our public life. This protectiveness may be somewhat lower at home and with friends, but it exists there as well. These behaviors could look like hesitancy to share information; withdrawal, silence or they could be far more aggressive such as verbal or physical violence. The reason this protectiveness is a problem is that it contributes to the breakdown of communication, trust, and therefore relationships; and the breakdown of relationships leads to failure.

Everything we hold to be

true was arrived at in relationship with others. It will be the same with any new truth. This is why it takes a lot to get us to question what we believe to be true. We do not want to risk having to shed the relationships attached to those ideas. Yet, this questioning, which entails the forming of new relationships, is the only path to innovation and learning. Otherwise, as prisoners of our experience, we will lack the knowing to act correctly in response to new challenges.

Ladder of Inference Reconstructed

The work of Chris Argyris, and later Peter Senge, popularized the idea that people construct reality based on their experience in order to determine their actions. The central idea was that by understanding the mental process underlying their action choices, human beings could achieve intended consequences and observe them selves to learn if their actions were effective. Argyris' called his model the "ladder of inference." The progression of the Ladder shows how people

move from observation to action. At the bottom of the ladder, reality is initially perceived as *Real Data & Experience*, such as that captured by a movie camera. The human mind then selects a set of *Selected Data & Experience* to which it pays attention. To this *Selected Data & Experience* it affixes *Meaning*, develops *Assumptions*, and comes to *Conclusions*, which become *Beliefs*. Beliefs then form the basis of *Actions*, which create additional *Real Data & Experience*. The movement up this ladder is unconscious and automatic. It happens in an instant. One of the inherent problems with this process is that experience often causes one to see what one expects to see. The mind goes directly from beliefs to selecting the data it prefers to see, thus blocking out potentially important information.

The New Model

The power structure of the organization influences decision making consciously and unconsciously. If the power structure has not

changed to support desired changes, actions are unlikely to change. Included in this definition of influences are politics, threat of exclusion or loss, rewards, acceptance, security, protection and so on. I have placed this influence as a circle around the entire reasoning process because it is the overriding boundary of interactions influencing human actions.

There are exceptions to this rule, of course. The outliers and deviants that act outside of mainstream expectations, rewards and threats, have been very influential in moving us forward in our understanding of reality. But we have too much historical proof of our tendency to act within the boundaries of the power structure to discount its tremendous influence. All we can do is raise our awareness of it, and work to understand our own choices and their consequences.

There is no such thing as a powerful autonomous individual, nor is there such a thing as a lone creator. This is a myth. Each of us operates within a web of relationships that provide us with identity and purpose, and provide us access to all the knowledge that came before. At times the web may be invisible such as the influence and support we receive from parents or mentors who are dead. Our history and culture speak to us

perhaps with more impact than the person next to us because it is imbued with the aura of truth. We are also constrained by the realities of power, and what we don't know. The circle of power surrounding the circle of meaning can block knowledge and information or it can supply the courage to look outward past the known. We do have free will and some ability to step outside the circle. Few do.

Human beings work together to create reality. First by interacting with each other to make sense of reality, and then having that guide their decisions and actions. *Interaction is the means for the transmission of information.* Face-to-face is the most potent, but all forms of interaction contribute to understanding. New beliefs do not become part of the whole until they are completely integrated through this communication process. This model implies that change happens by aligning the power structure to support desired outcomes and influencing action through interaction and conversations with people.

All of these ideas are supported by research on the human brain in the growing field of neuroscience. You may easily access more information in downloading David Rock's article, "Managing with the Brain in Mind."
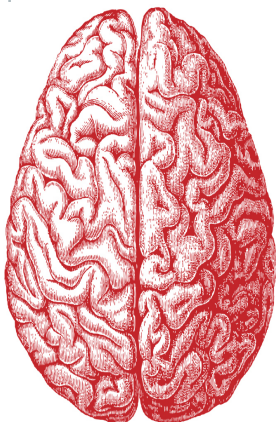
Neuroscience Contribution

An important piece of the puzzle that supports the law of relationship is the research in neuroscience reported by researchers like David Rock in multiple books and articles. In *Managing with the Brain in Mind* (2009) he summarized the research

into four main themes:

1. The rational is overrated
2. We've got emotions backwards
3. Social issues are primary
4. Attention changes the brain

Building relationships is the foundation of organizational effectiveness because:

- We construct our interpretation of reality in interaction with others
- What we experience as our mind is the internalization of social relationships
- Interaction between relationships is the means for transmission of information between humans
- The threat of ostracism is equal to the threat of violence
- There is no such thing as a powerful autonomous individual or lone creator.
- We create within a web of relationships that provide identity, purpose and meaning

Contact: rosa@carrilloconsultants.com for a complete description of the Relationship-Based Change Model

Step	Process Description ©2012 Rosa Antonia Carrillo
1: Initiation	Dissatisfaction with the current experience is creating a desire for change. Neither the preferred outcomes nor the nature of the obstacles are yet clear.
2: Engagement	Engagement is the path to developing a common understanding of the problem and acceptable approaches to solutions. To do this the questions must go to uncovering the beliefs that have formed around why things work or don't.
3: Inquiry	Gather people with the knowledge of specific operational details and others who understand the larger picture. We cannot solve the complex problems we've created with yesterday's beliefs.
4: Gathering Support	The goal is to arrive at a common sense of the problem and possible solutions through sensemaking. Through common understanding we engender trust and open communication; and thus, gather support.
5: Perpetual Assessment	This is a state of constant awareness and evaluation. Measurement takes the form of describing the ways of thinking that people need to adopt to correct deficiencies as soon as they appear
6: Reframing	Newly understood data reveals former misunderstandings and mistaken ideas so that correct action is more likely now that the problem is seen more clearly.