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contents

- 4 Corporate coaching goes mainstream**
How to leverage high-potential employees and nix the cost of executive failure
- 5 The science of change**
How predictability can guide your next change initiative
- 6 Operational vs. strategic**
Why it takes two essential sides of leadership to grow like the giants
- 7 Pay it forward**
How to become a customer-focused company
- 8 The best bosses**
Why leadership is all about growing healthy relationships
- 9 Don't be the last to know**
How executive coaching overcomes ineffective leadership styles
- 10 Motivational momentum**
How to inspire employees after the honeymoon
- 11 Managing up**
What employees need to become energized self leaders
- 12 Driving results through culture**
Why defining your organization by default ensures mediocrity
- 13 Know can do**
Why you benefit from paring information down to the critical few
- 14 Core skills for new managers**
How to help rising stars wear a closet full of hats
- 15 Cleared for takeoff**
How to accelerate the productivity of new hires

Corporate coaching goes mainstream

How to leverage high-potential employees and nix the cost of executive failure **Interviewed by Paul Harvey**

Ten years ago if an employer asked you to work with a business coach, you might have taken it as a hint to update your resume. Now, coaching is perceived both as a valuable perk offered to high-potential individuals, and a strategy for companies to avoid the enormous costs related to executive failure in the first year.

But what actually occurs between a coach and executive to propel an already successful individual even further toward his or her goals and objectives?

“It’s like a brain massage that produces permanent shifts in attitudes, belief systems and how people operate,” says Madeleine Homan, founder of Coaching Services at The Ken Blanchard Companies in Escondido. “It translates into observable differences in what executives do and say — and that’s what organizations are looking for.”

Smart Business recently spoke to Homan about how a clear mission will produce the most successful coaching results.

Why are leaders and organizations working with coaches?

It’s rare that an individual wakes up one day and says, ‘Wow, I really could use a coach.’ The main reason for bringing in a coach is that an organization is seeking extra support for its leaders. With the trend toward the abolishment of middle management, your new managers may only have time to do the bare minimum. They may not know anything about leadership and haven’t had time to develop good management practices for themselves. That’s where coaching comes in.

Coaches have all of the content background about best leadership and management practices, phenomenal communication models, skills around how to deal with power and influence models, and they’ve read all the books that you don’t have time to read. A coach can share the one concept in a book that’s going to be useful to you right this minute. Organizations also are utilizing onboarding coaching for people starting new jobs or making the transition from individual contributor to manager or from manager to senior leader.



Madeleine Homan
Founder, Coaching Services
The Ken Blanchard Companies

What mindset can help maximize coaching?

Coaches understand organizations and understand people’s temperaments, personalities and types, and they don’t judge. Many executives go into coaching thinking their organization is giving them coaching because something is wrong. That’s not coaching. Occasionally, there is coaching to close a gap in a skill set, but mostly, it’s for development, because leaders today need to go from A to B so much faster than they have in the past.

People are realizing that coaching is a perk for those who are adding value to the organization. That is changing the mindset of people going into coaching. Participants should be oriented to coaching thoroughly so they truly understand what it is, what they can expect to get out of it, and what’s expected of them. It’s like anything else — you’re going to get out of it what you put in.

Sometimes people come in and try to ‘yes’ the coach. They try to fake it and make their coach feel like they’re actually working. Good coaches know how to recognize that and call it out. Coaches also challenge people when they’re willing par-

ticipants, but are not stepping up or taking the risks.

What are turning points in a coaching program?

There is a positive turning point when the organization’s sponsors first see that the coaching is paying off. But the first individual turning point is not always a good one. When people start the coaching, they establish some useful areas to focus on with their coach, and they get into action. They get the low-hanging fruit and make some easy changes. But sometime around the third or fourth session, they’ll get up against it with actually challenging themselves to do something that’s hard. They become a disillusioned learner and hit the wall. The coaches know this happens, and they’re very adept at helping them work through to the next level of having a win.

How is a coaching relationship concluded?

It’s a mark of a novice or unethical coach to try to keep himself in the game. Both you and your coach have to aim for a good ending point. If you complete the program and say, ‘Wow! I want to keep working with my coach to accomplish a whole new set of objectives,’ that’s fine. But when executives hang out with their coach without clear objectives, action items and milestones, organizations start to feel like they’re wasting money — and they are. Unless the mission is clear, nobody will know what has been accomplished.

Can coaching become a permanent activity?

The amazing part of coaching is that when you’re facing big transitions — a job change, a move to a different company, a huge promotion, or you’ve left the workforce to become a full-time mom — it’s great to be able to go back to your coach. You can cut right to the chase because there’s all that history, and the coach understands your values and who you are. <<

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The science of change

How predictability can guide your next change initiative **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

Today's spotlight on business speed and agility is magnifying the shortcomings and frequency of poorly executed change initiatives. The truth is that nearly 70 percent of all change implementations never bear fruit. There are many documented reasons why change initiatives fail.

"Often, the people leading the change think that announcing change is the same as implementing it, so they don't pay attention," says Patricia Zigarmi, Ed.D., organizational change expert and Founding Associate of The Ken Blanchard Companies. "They don't surface people's concerns regarding change."

Smart Business spoke with Zigarmi about how change elements are predictable and why leaders of successful change initiatives involve a broad-based team to address employee concerns on the front end.

Why do change efforts fail?

A big reason why change efforts fail is leaders often don't surface people's concerns. The immediate reaction when people are asked to change is, 'What am I going to give up?' They're talking to each other about those concerns but not to the change sponsors. Leaders need to eavesdrop on the conversations about concerns people are having. Another big reason change fails is because the people who are asked to change are not involved in the planning for it. These employees feel closest to the customer, the work processes and the problems at hand, and they want to influence the changes that are being architected at the top.

Some initiatives fail when there is no communicated sense of urgency or when the business case for the change isn't made clear. People need to see a gap between the what-is and the what's-possible. People are smart — if you help them understand the change from the standpoint of the person deciding the change, they'll come to the same conclusions about compelling reasons to change. Other factors for failure include misaligned systems within the company and change leaders who are not credible or trustworthy.

Are there predictable reactions to change?

Absolutely. People have predictable and sequential concerns with change. In the



Patricia Zigarmi, Ed.D.
Founding Associate
The Ken Blanchard Companies

1980s, I worked on a study to find out why a set of educational initiatives tested extremely well, but when they were rolled out, they didn't achieve results on a mass basis. What we found out was that nobody had surfaced the concerns of the teachers with regard to the changes. We created a model and ended up proving in subsequent change efforts that reactions to change are indeed predictable and sequential.

How can change leaders apply this model?

The model delineated six buckets of concerns with change, and if leaders would only pay attention to the first three, the rest of the change would take care of itself. The first bucket is around information concerns. People don't want to be sold on the change. They want to know what it is, what you are seeing and why things have to change. The second bucket involves personal concerns. They're the most ignored because they sound like whining, but what they really are, are clues about resistance to the proposed change. People don't want to know why the change is good for the company; they want to know why it's good for them, and they want to know if they will be able to master the new

skills the change requires. The third bucket is around the nitty-gritty implementation concerns like system alignment, best practices and the daily mechanics of making the change happen.

The remaining buckets of concern are impact concerns — does the change make a difference; collaboration concerns — who else needs to be on board; and refinement concerns — what's even better than what you're doing right now?

How can leaders best communicate change?

I think the minute people sense a crack in senior leadership support for the change, they think they don't have to get on board, or they believe they can wait around and see what happens. It's really important for dialogue to happen around the change, at the top. What is the compelling case? What is the vision? What is the picture of the future if this change were to be successfully implemented?

The real need here is for leaders to speak with one voice, to communicate the same message, no matter who is communicating. Leaders must explain the priority of a change against all the other initiatives going on in the company. Leaders also should express trust and confidence in the decisions of their colleagues because if that doesn't happen, the change is doomed from the front end.

What are the key steps to a successful change initiative?

Top-down change efforts appear to get off to a faster start, but many times, the reality is all of the details aren't thought out and ultimately the change doesn't get implemented. Leaders need to listen to people's concerns and find ways to address them. They need to create a compelling business case and expand involvement and influence to gain the buy-in of those impacted by the change at all phases of the change process. A high-involvement, collaborative change effort dramatically increases the probability of a successful change initiative. <<

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Operational vs. strategic

Why it takes two essential sides of leadership to grow like the giants **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

It's no accident that companies like Microsoft, Starbucks and Southwest Airlines are giants in their industries. They continue to grow because people get charged up to work in the cultures these organizations present.

"Whenever you talk to people at companies who are chasing some kind of industry leader, they always think the other company has a better strategy," says Scott Blanchard, executive vice president, Client Solutions, The Ken Blanchard Companies in San Diego. "But what these leading companies typically have is a better run organization, and their strategy involves people."

Smart Business spoke with Blanchard about the functions of strategic leadership and operational leadership and how their impact on employee happiness and customer loyalty cannot be ignored.

When do the two sides of leadership emerge?

In the beginning, the founders' visions have to be crystal clear to form the organization. Most of the energies have to be around strategic leadership — entrepreneuring, or inventing, the business. As a company grows and develops and starts to create some volume, they then need to up the focus on operational leadership. It's not necessary in the beginning because it's so small and so flat, but as the organization grows in size and complexity, operational leadership becomes more important. You have to be careful though that you don't kill the entrepreneurial spirit. Look at Google and eBay — they're big companies, but growth hasn't killed their cultures of spirit and creativity.

What variables do the two sides of leadership affect?

When we took a comprehensive look at the research and studied how everything related, we discovered that there were, in fact, two kinds of leadership out there, and categories that we originally called employee success, customer success and organizational success were actually much broader than we thought. So we created new labels — buckets or catch-alls — for all kinds of different measures of the three variables.



Scott Blanchard

Executive vice president, Client Solutions
The Ken Blanchard Companies

We found that operational leadership has a direct, positive and/or negative effect on hard and soft measures of employee passion or employee success. It matters to the way people feel about the company, the way they think about the company, and the memories and the meaning they create working there. It also has a very strong impact on customer success because the operational managers make decisions around the products and services you offer, and they're the ones ultimately responsible for the quality of the service and the customer experience. Operational leadership has less of an effect on organizational vitality or success because that primarily comes from your customers and employees.

What is the most important connection between the two sides of leadership and the variables?

The connection between employee passion and customer devotion is two-way and is so strong that any prudent business leader cannot ignore it. Many organizations are run as if those dynamics don't matter very much. Leaders need to understand how important it is to create the right kind of culture, hire good managers, and provide those managers with

the skills and abilities to make employees happy, productive and loyal — instead of seemingly doing the opposite.

It starts with strategic leadership. If there's not a declared value — an imperative within the company that says we are going to be a really healthy company — then by default, the natural dynamics of humans in organizations emerge. I often say that the only natural things that happen in an organization are fear, frustration, inefficiency, friction and political mayhem. If you want to make something positive happen, you need a clear vision and a plan, and you need to stick to the plan.

How do the two sides of leadership impact each other?

They have to support each other. It's a cascading model — the vision and direction set at the top need to cascade down to the senior leaders, middle managers, managers who run the business, supervisors and down to the people at the front lines. When those people get information, they need to share it, and that information needs to flow back up to the top. In companies that don't work, there is a block in energy, information and influence that goes down and up. That's where companies like Sears ran into so much trouble because there were nearly a dozen layers between the president and the store manager.

What should CEOs ask themselves about their organizations?

I often refer to 13 questions that CEOs should consider. Some of the toughest questions include: Are your leaders and managers held accountable for employee morale? Do your employees feel and know their work is meaningful and important? Do your employees perceive that top management believes, communicates and behaves as if people are critically important to the organization's success? Answering no to these questions may indicate your organization is out of alignment — with energies spent on things like politics and resource allocation instead of delivering better products and services to your customers. <<

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Pay it forward

How to become a customer-focused company **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

No company is perfect, and, eventually, a big mistake may cost you a big customer. But when you begin losing customers over small issues, it may be a sign that it's time to revisit your commitment to being a customer-focused company.

When a trend of losing customers develops, many leaders make a beeline for their customer service department. After all, isn't it responsible for keeping clients satisfied? Not if your goal is to become customer-focused. The best customer-focused initiatives run from the top all the way down, and the speed at which customers run to your competitor is, in fact, directly related to the depth of their relationship with your front-line employees.

"When you have emotional connections with your customers, it really binds you together," says Kathy Riley Cuff, senior consulting partner, The Ken Blanchard Companies. "And to get that connection, your front-line employees have to be passionate— if you don't have great employees dealing with your clients, you're going to continue turning over customers."

Smart Business recently spoke with Cuff about why every company really is in the business of customer service and, while your products or services may bring customers to your door, how it's the relationships that keep them coming back.

Is there a growth stage in organizations when customer service typically suffers?

Yes. It happens when a company tries to grow too big, too fast — bigger than its ability to manage the process. You've got to do your homework and have a plan.

A lot of successful companies are successful in spite of themselves. You might open up 10 new offices, but if your systems do not support that growth, your internal folks, your employees, are the ones that suffer, hearing the frustrations from external customers doing business with you. They'd like to serve the customer, but the current systems you have



Kathy Riley Cuff
Senior consulting partner
The Ken Blanchard Companies

don't support them. You need to set them up for success so they can better serve the external customer.

Can you describe an emotional customer connection?

Here's a grassroots example of building emotional connections. There's a little restaurant where I live, with good food and moderate prices. When my kids were young, if the restaurant wasn't busy, the owner would come over and take my kids and say 'come on kids, let's go look at the rabbits out the back door.' There were probably never any rabbits there, but the owner wanted to give us 10 minutes of peace and quiet at the table alone together.

What happened was, the times we went in and the service wasn't great or they were really busy and short-staffed, I was willing to make exceptions for that. I even got up and poured my own water. The moral of the story is if you don't have an emotional connection with your customers, it's much easier for them to find fault with you.

KATHY RILEY CUFF is a senior consulting partner with The Ken Blanchard Companies in San Diego. Reach her through The Ken Blanchard Companies Web site at www.kenblanchard.com/cuff.

What is the most difficult aspect of creating a customer-focused company?

It's getting people to buy in from the top down and then getting them to live it. Top management must walk the talk and really be good role models to the service initiatives. They can't just say it and go along with it to appease others — they've got to be living it day in and day out and promoting the beliefs. Beliefs drive behaviors. For example, if you have a customer service department, everybody in the company may believe that department is the only one that deals with customer service. Instead, you have to get everybody in the organization to believe that it is everyone's responsibility to deliver service. The other difficult aspect is keeping it front of mind. This shouldn't be the training program of the month; you should be promoting that: We are going to be a customer-focused company, and we are going to consistently and persistently keep it in front of you.

How can you turn front-line employees into customer-focused employees?

There's been a lot of research by my colleagues around the leadership profit chain. They found three aspects that make an organization vital, including financial success, employee passion and customer devotion. The results have shown a direct correlation between employee passion and customer devotion and, if you have those two, financial success happens.

Your people need to be asked for their input on things and need to feel like they're listened to and that their ideas matter. And I'm a true believer that there is very little information that should be withheld from your employees, because you want to create ownership in these folks — you want them to feel like this is their business. An employee who feels valued and supported by the systems is going to be happier dealing with your external customers. <<

The best bosses

Why leadership is all about growing healthy relationships **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

Take a moment to remember your favorite boss — the person who most inspired you to be your best. Have you ever examined further the traits you most admired in him or her? Looking past that person's awards and successes, you'll likely uncover a caring leader, skilled in relationship management.

So what creates the foundation for a caring and effective style for leading people to be their best?

"It's all about healthy, successful, effective relationships," says Ann Phillips, senior consulting partner, The Ken Blanchard Companies, in San Diego. "And it's our relationships — positive or negative — that determine the outcomes and results we get."

Smart Business recently spoke with Phillips about certain key concepts explained in Ken Blanchard's book, "Whale Done," including "best boss activities" and the three keys to positive relationships.

What is putting even more focus on leadership activities?

According to a 2002 study by The Conference Board, just over half of all workers in the U.S. are satisfied with their jobs, compared to 59 percent back in 1995. So today's leaders have to develop strategies around increasing employee retention and keeping the best talent. We talk a lot about improving service to your team members and customers because employees who feel appreciated and fairly treated take better care of one another and your customers. Ken Blanchard said, "The one thing your competition can never steal from you is the relationship you have with your people and the relationship they have with your customers."

What is the basis for a good relationship-building strategy?

There are three keys to positive relationships, including building trust, accentuating the positive and redirecting the energy when mistakes are made. To build trust, your team should perceive that you mean no harm. For this to happen, you need to be visible, with a physical presence. Another key is to make yourself known by sharing some personal experience with your followers and engaging



Ann Phillips
Senior consulting partner
The Ken Blanchard Companies

them in meaningful dialogue. And you've got to follow up this dialogue by maintaining consistency between your words and your deeds. Finally, the best leaders are always asking themselves, 'How can I help people grow?' You've got to create a framework to educate and train in a scenario that allows risks and encourages experimentation.

Should leaders focus on improving negative behavior or accentuating the positives?

One of the most effective ways to improve negative behavior is to focus on positive behavior. You absolutely need to accentuate the positives, with the mindset of catching people doing things right or at least almost right. You first may need to undo your 'gotcha' history. Do you make time to talk? Do you thoroughly explain the changes you wish to make? And are you patient with yourself and others?

The groundwork for effective praising starts with immediately telling people exactly what they did right or almost right, why you care, and what the impact of their actions was. This also is a great time to ask why they did it and learn their motivation. Finally, encourage them to keep up the good work

and remember that the reward for good work should not be more work.

How should leaders respond to mistakes?

Leaders often struggle with this: How do you redirect the energy when mistakes are made? Discipline should be reserved for 'won't do' behavior, not 'can't do' behavior. Positive consequences and sustainability strategies are important because 85 to 90 percent of what impacts future behavior comes from consequences — what happens after somebody does something. Leaders need to learn that sustaining performance requires learning the effect of four consequences: No response, negative response, positive response and redirection. We find that most leaders focus on the first two, when the biggest impact really comes from the last two.

How is behavior best redirected?

It's important to describe the error or problem as soon as possible — clearly and without blame — and describe to them the negative impact of their actions. If it's appropriate, take the blame for not making the task clear. Go over the task in detail and make sure it is clearly understood, and express your continuing trust and confidence in the person's ability to master the task.

What are proven 'best boss' activities for leading people to be their best?

Try looking back at how you became the leader you are today. Think of a person you believe was your best boss and ask yourself what made that person your best boss. Did he provide tools and resources? Did he praise and recognize? Was she a visionary? Did she challenge you? This person may have had those and many other admirable qualities, but if you look more closely, you will realize he or she genuinely cared about you as a person, not only as an employee. The journey to improving relationships and leading people to be their best may not always be easy, but it will surely be worth it when they look back and remember you as their best boss. <<

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Don't be the last to know

How executive coaching overcomes ineffective leadership styles **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

When a poor leadership style is revealed by climate surveys or 360 feedback, ugly symptoms like frequent turnover and low morale may already have a foothold in the company.

There are many ineffective leadership styles — from being too collaborative, too analytical, too controlling or too slow — that can send employees running to the exits.

“One of the most difficult styles for teams is when the leader is perceived as arrogant and self-serving,” says Linda Miller, global liaison for coaching, The Ken Blanchard Companies. “This style often results in a team that is demoralized or stalled in its development toward self-reliance because the leader wants to be overly involved.”

Smart Business recently spoke with Miller about how executive coaching, if properly sold and embraced, can help struggling leaders recognize behaviors like arrogance that, when changed, create opportunities for exponential personal and team growth.

How is an executive best sold on a coaching program?

Especially with high-level leaders, it's important to position executive coaching as an investment, based on wanting them to progress upward in the company. Even when behaviors need to be addressed, positioning coaching as an investment rather than as a punishment creates higher buy-in from the leader.

One of the first areas to address with arrogant and self-serving leaders is their level of self-awareness. Often with arrogance, the level of self-awareness is low, even though the leader may not agree that it's low. Denial might be another way to put it. Getting this leader's attention is a first step, and this can occur through multirater (360) feedback tools. Part of the purpose and goal of coaching is to get agreement that the leader is behaving in a way that is having an unintended impact. If the leader doesn't agree that behaviors need to change, it limits the success of the coaching. The success of the coaching improves when the leader is fully engaged with the process and recognizes that behaviors must change.



Linda Miller
Global liaison for coaching
The Ken Blanchard Companies

What happens in the early phases of the coach/leader relationship?

In the interview and early phases of coaching, rapport and credibility must be established within the first few minutes. Whether the initial coaching contacts are by telephone or face to face, there has to be a sense that there is a good connection and partnership for a working relationship. Part of this is establishing a clear agreement about what coaching is and is not, what to expect, logistics, etc. It's also important to establish the leader's level of buy-in. For example, is the leader complying with the coaching because he or she was required to be coached, or does the leader want to be coached, knowing that he or she is engaging in the process as a choice for his or her own development? Once this is determined, it's time to identify and clarify the focus for the coaching. Identifying at least two to three clear objectives for coaching, based on feedback, is best. Many leaders decide to invite their leader or HR professional into this conversation to ensure the correct objectives are being addressed — for the leader as well as the organization.

LINDA MILLER is global liaison for coaching at The Ken Blanchard Companies and co-author of a new book entitled, “Coaching in Organizations: Best Coaching Practices from The Ken Blanchard Companies.” Reach her through The Ken Blanchard Companies Web site at www.kenblanchard.com/miller.

How do accomplished leaders first react to the coaching experience?

There are a variety of responses. Many have no idea what to expect. Some don't want the truth and are reluctant or defensive. Others embrace the coaching eagerly. I've been asked, “What makes you credible to coach me, and why should I talk with you?” Another commented, “I have no idea what coaching is or why I'm here. Am I in trouble?” Another said, “I know where I want to go in this company, but I'm not getting there. I'm committed to moving forward.” In a best-case scenario, the leader will be open with the coach and express concerns, skepticism or hope so that the responses can be addressed early.

What benefits await leaders who make the commitment to coaching?

Leaders who embrace coaching can find themselves growing exponentially. Remember, we are talking about high-functioning people. When they embrace coaching, they often recognize behaviors or results they hadn't seen before, and they can use this to make substantial changes in their team.

A great example is the senior leader who knew he was going to be tapped for an executive position, and coaching was offered to him for his development. Many years before, this person had seriously offended an executive leader in the organization and now this executive was blocking his promotion. As part of the coaching, the leader decided that he needed to clean up this old mess, and he spent several coaching sessions planning his approach. When he called the executive and took responsibility for the situation that had occurred, he was amazed at the executive's response. Several months later, the leader was tapped for the executive position and ultimately found out that his former adversary had become one of his biggest advocates. This is just one of the prizes that can await those who embrace coaching. <<

Motivational momentum

How to inspire employees after the honeymoon **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

The euphoria and promise of a new employee's first few weeks can be difficult to maintain. Recent studies have shown that, over time, nearly 70 percent of employees become disengaged with their organizations.

These numbers suggest a gap in leadership's ability to build on the initial energy of a new hire. Workers always hit the ground running, but without a mix of motivation, inspiration and a clear vision of the big picture, they soon run out of steam. So how do the best leaders maintain motivational momentum?

"Every day, our employees leave us clues or triggers about what motivates them," says Mark Paskowitz, senior consulting partner, The Ken Blanchard Companies® in Escondido. "We need to be aware of what they are."

Smart Business recently spoke with Paskowitz about the perils of a one-size-fits-all motivational strategy and why the best leaders know how their followers are feeling when they come to work on Monday morning.

How can a motivational strategy backfire?

I remember early in my career as a new supervisor wanting to acknowledge one of my peak performers for a job well done. Since I was extroverted in my personality and communication style, I assumed that my employee would like to be acknowledged in front of 50 of her peers. Immediately after the public celebration, she pulled me aside and said, 'Never do that again.' She was an introvert and didn't like public celebrations. As a new supervisor, it was an early wake-up call, which taught me one size doesn't fit all. What motivates one person may not motivate another.

What practical tools and insights can managers apply immediately?

It starts when employees first join your organization. How do you maintain their initial excitement about joining the company? Their immediate manager can make all the difference in the world. I remember, before payroll automation, a manager who would leave positive comments regarding my performance attached to my paychecks. It was



Mark Paskowitz
Senior consulting partner
The Ken Blanchard Companies

a small and simple thing, and yet, it was very powerful. People want four to five positive strokes to one redirect/reprimand. Redirection should be focused around keeping the energy positive and delivered while not punishing someone who is still learning. You learn a lot about organizational culture and leadership when people make mistakes. It is human nature to largely focus on people making mistakes instead of when they do a great job. Praise is one of the most underutilized skills that managers can always do more of.

What are some different forms of motivation?

Intrinsic motivation focuses on activities an employee enjoys doing that bring them meaning, fulfillment and enjoyment. The key is being able to tie the intrinsic needs of the person with critical performance indicators. Can this worker find fulfillment with what he or she is doing while providing value and high performance for the organization? The critical question to ask as leaders is how do our employees feel when they come to work on Monday morning?

Extrinsic motivation focuses on external rewards or outcomes an employee receives

for doing a job well. Whether it's a promotion or earning a well-deserved raise, the key is to build the person's confidence and competence so he or she performs well on a day-to-day basis. The focus should remain on what we can do to help our employees achieve success.

What motivational methods are best from an organizational perspective?

One of the big motivational factors for organizations is having individuals understand how what they do is tied to something bigger or how what they do ties to the business strategy and organizational purpose. You must ask yourself, 'Do people rally around the vision of our organization?'

Another best practice is to tie great performance into the performance management process. A lot of people fear the end of the year review because they aren't sure what is coming. By having frequent and quality conversations, we ensure that employees are aware of what is going on. That way we celebrate having employees at the end of the year earning an A. The key is to develop a systematic process instead of an annual event.

How can leaders define a process for motivational strategies moving forward?

In partnering and coaching our employees, we must take the time to intimately get to know them — letting them know we care and continuously inquiring about their interests and well-being. The old saying, 'People want to know you care before they care how much you know' is so true. You should develop a series of courageous and compelling questions to help discern your workers' motivations. Some questions to ask include: What brings them energy and fulfillment? What do they strive for in a great working relationship? How do they learn successfully on the job? Where do they see themselves going in the future? How can we best support them? These are a sampling of the questions we need to ask over time to maintain motivational momentum. <<

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Managing up

What employees need to become energized self leaders **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

As business leaders compete to boost their return on human capital while perfectly executing their company's latest business strategies, it's no wonder that employee passion remains a top priority. So how are today's leaders creating a passionate work force, energized and prepared to meet the challenges of today's agile organizations?

"We have companies that are trying to do more with less, with a shrinking employee population," says Phil Reynolds, senior consulting partner, The Ken Blanchard Companies®. "So companies must create self leaders who will give the extra energy toward the key performance indicators critical for overall organizational vitality."

Smart Business recently spoke with Reynolds about certain key concepts discussed in Ken Blanchard's book "Self Leadership and the One Minute Manager," (coauthored with Susan Fowler and Laurence Hawkins) including how managing up helps self leaders get the job done, builds trust and creates passion in the people who are willing to give extra effort.

What is the definition of a self leader?

The book 'Self Leadership and the One Minute Manager' defines a self leader as someone who has both the skill sets and the mindset to lead themselves to reach their critical tasks and goals.

How is self leadership a benefit to organizations?

Companies want to create a work force that is both able and willing to meet the challenges of today's fast-paced, flatter organizations. There's been a lot of focus on retention as the grand prize, but sticking around might actually mean that people are stuck in a rut, and retention doesn't automatically deliver stellar performance or extraordinary effort.

Self leaders are employees who will be both productive and also go the extra mile toward achieving those key performance indicators and key work areas. So it's not just people sticking around or hanging around — it's retaining people who are actually giving their best to the customers and to their job.



Phil Reynolds
Senior consulting partner
The Ken Blanchard Companies

How does an employee 'manage up'?

As a self manager, you must first honestly ask yourself a set of questions including, what is the task or goal I'm being asked to do? Am I competent? Do I have the skills to do this task and goal? What's my commitment level? Am I motivated? Am I confident I can do this task without help? Once you determine these needs, then you can begin to ask yourself if you need additional direction or support. Managing up means not just going to your leader but also taking the responsibility of going wherever you need to go to get what you need. It could be your boss, it could be your colleague, or it could be a team member.

What is a major roadblock to managing up?

Mindset can be the most difficult aspect of managing up. You can have the skills in place, but if your mindset is that you believe you can't manage up, you won't. Let's say you feel your boss won't listen to any of your ideas — that is a constraint you have around your working conditions. So that assumed constraint — a belief based on past experience

that limits current experience — actually limits you from managing up. One of the things that research has shown is that the truth will not set you free. Someone can come in and tell you the truth about something, but unless you have a mindset and framework that reinforces that, you're not going to act on it.

Where do you see companies struggling with building self leaders?

We've taught leaders how to let go, but we haven't taught people how to hang on. Companies teach leaders how to delegate, communicate and lead through change, but we don't teach the employees how to manage themselves through that process. When you empower leaders but they don't know what you're empowering them for, they become frustrated because they feel that the organization is dumping work on them. With no sense of enthusiasm around what they're doing, they'll do the very minimum required.

What are the managers' responsibilities for self leadership?

The managers' responsibilities are communicating to employees a clear picture of what a good job looks like, a clear outcome or target, and then providing the communication mechanism or venue for the employees to be able to share with them what they need. The main responsibility of the manager is to provide the followers what they cannot provide for themselves by building trust with fair practices and helping them reach their goals.

What are the responsibilities of self leaders?

As a self leader, your job is to diagnose and determine what you need from your leader. Most of the research that has been done on the subject of leadership has been written from the perspective of the leader — the top-down approach. The leader 'empowers' you or tries to 'engage' you in the workplace. The self leader takes ownership for the power and responsibility that is given to him or her in the workplace. <<

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Driving results through culture

Why defining your organization by default ensures mediocrity **Interviewed by Paul Harvey**

Corporate culture — an organization's personality — is the sum total of the company's values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and practices of its members. But many managers may have just a vague view of their organization's culture and little background around how it came to be.

So how is corporate culture established in most organizations?

"By default," says Chris Edmonds, senior consulting partner with The Ken Blanchard Companies.[®] "And if organizational cultures are created by default rather than intention, you'll likely have people who aren't consistently behaving in ways that deliver high-quality solutions."

Smart Business recently spoke with Edmonds about how to assess your company's culture and how you can transform culture if you're willing to move away from seeing it as a soft and fuzzy, irrelevant concept.

Why is culture so important?

Our research and research by Jim Collins, the Gallup Organization and others provides abundant evidence that work forces with engaged and accountable people deliver strong customer loyalty, increased productivity and higher profitability and return for shareholders. One of our culture change clients, Banta Catalog, generated a 20 percent increase in employee passion, turnover was cut by 50 percent and profitability improved 36 percent in the first year of the values alignment process. The creation of a purposeful culture — one that holds employees accountable for exceeding performance expectations while modeling the organization's declared values — is critical for business leaders in today's marketplace.

What are the ideal foundations and the realities of culture?

We talk about four foundations of culture, including vision, purpose, values and strategies. Vision is what you are striving to become and purpose is about what you are in the business of doing. Values are what you stand for and use as a guide for actions and decisions, while strategies are your plan for making your vision a reality while living your purpose and your values.



Chris Edmonds
Senior consulting partner
The Ken Blanchard Companies

Unfortunately, most organizational cultures happen by default rather than by intention, and the existing culture of an organization can hold staff back from consistent high performance and strong engagement. Existing practices can actually ensure delivery of mediocre performance and poor customer service, which cost companies money every day.

Where will leaders find soft spots in their corporate culture?

Many organizations publish a mission statement and desired values, but values are not measured or monitored with the same discipline and diligence as goal accomplishment and performance. And culture often is viewed by senior leaders as soft, not relevant to performance and hard to put one's hands on. If you can't measure culture, it is seen as peripheral to core business operations. The trick is, if you're not getting what you want, then it's time to change those expectations.

How can culture be transformed?

First, you have to assess the issues with a purposeful culture assessment. The assessment differentiates between current reality

and best practices, provides a snapshot of current organizational systems and practices, and it can be used as a gap reduction or action planning tool.

After the assessment, you have to take proactive steps and intentionally create a culture that allows the organization to differentiate itself from competitors, to really live its values, and to really deliver on the promises it makes for products and services. Most senior leaders have never experienced successful culture change. Far fewer have led successful culture change. Senior executives and senior leadership teams must learn to follow proven practices that fit their unique environment and effectively manage obstacles and gain traction on the desired high-performance, values-aligned culture. The focus is not to simply identify culture issues but to map out strategies to address those gaps, execute that strategy, and see demonstrable improvement in performance.

What are the best culture transformation practices and their outcomes?

First, senior management must embrace and actively lead the change effort, and a steering committee should be in place to guide the change. You must ensure there is involvement at all levels. It's critical that all staff members are held accountable for demonstrating the new behaviors and rules, and finally, continued communication about the change and stories that reinforce the effort must be in place.

The outcomes to these best practices are numerous. Following the best practices creates involvement and buy-in for change throughout the organization and creates accountability for creating and sustaining the culture. Next, it provides a vision that people can relate to and increases organizational alignment and focus. It also aligns performance expectations, values and rewards systems, and creates a sense of community and pride. Finally, following best practices demonstrates measurable gains in performance and passion and creates an environment in which even small changes can have dramatic impact. <<

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Know can do

Why you benefit from paring information down to the critical few **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

John F. Kennedy once remarked, “Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.” And people have taken this philosophy to heart.

They attend lectures, seminars and night classes on a host of topics. They subscribe to cable television services that provide a nearly limitless smorgasbord of choices. They proudly report to their friends that they’re “on their third book this month.” And they surf the Web. But how much of this information really sticks? How much of it has an impact on people’s lives, either professional or personal?

“Very little,” says Dr. Dick Ruhe, a senior consulting partner with The Ken Blanchard Companies®. “And if there is a trend right now, it’s in the wrong direction. Now, we can get our hands almost immediately on anything that’s out there. The problem is there’s too much of it.”

Smart Business spoke with Ruhe about this tidal wave of information and what to do about it. He recently coauthored “Know Can Do!” with Ken Blanchard and Paul J. Meyer. The book deals head-on with the challenge of getting things to stick.

What are the three reasons people don’t learn?

The first is ‘information overload.’ There is simply too much coming in. People either don’t focus, or can’t. The mass of data dilutes any one piece of it. We don’t need more breadth, we need more depth. The second is ‘negative filtering.’ People close their own minds through negative thinking. They critically question all new ideas. Such evaluation is helpful, but too much of it is crippling. The third is ‘lack of follow-up.’ The research is clear that even when people successfully incorporate fresh information into their thinking, it rapidly goes away unless used very soon.

Can less actually be more when it comes to reading and learning?

One of the problems that people have with knowledge is they keep wanting to know new things. Who wouldn’t want to be in the group that wants to know new things? Besides, they actually don’t have a



Dick Ruhe
Senior consulting partner
The Ken Blanchard Companies

choice. We already know that most people spend the majority of their communications time reading and listening, rather than writing and speaking. So there is a nonstop flood of information coming in. People complain about being buried in it.

The problem is that people can only emphasize a few things. Those who try to emphasize everything emphasize nothing. In order to take advantage of new information, we have to reduce this flood down to the ‘critical few.’

The book mentions Green Light Thinking. What is that?

Not only are people themselves hypercritical, but they are surrounded by wet blankets. When approached by others with ideas, there is a natural human tendency to look for what is wrong or at least the major obstacles to adopting a new order of things. A limited amount of this is OK, but too much reduces any chance of running with a new approach or solution.

We suggest holding people accountable for Green Light Thinking. Before they can say anything negative about something, they must identify reasons and solutions

that support it. There will be plenty of time later to coarse- or fine-tune the recommendation. During meetings it can make sense to literally assign someone to be the Green Light Thinker. The person becomes the advocate and contributes the optimism and positive mindset that often are missing.

How can you change the energy level people have to do things differently?

An essential ingredient in making change happen, any kind of change, is ensuring that there are positive consequences in place. Whether it’s for others or for ourselves, there must be a conscious or subconscious association of good things with the initiative. Energy includes drive, motivation, attitude, inspiration, enthusiasm, etc. All of these have a strong positive correlation with positive consequences. If you go on a diet, recognize progress — any progress. If you are trying to adopt a new problem-solving system, celebrate success in moving forward.

How does the concept of unconditional love come into play?

This is quite related to positive consequences. People get so accustomed to trying to do better, they actually don’t even see the improvement; they only see where they could have done better. So they predispose themselves to a critical, negativistic attitude. In ‘Know Can Do!’ we suggest ‘catching people doing something right.’ Many people go through their whole lives trying to finally get approval from important others who may not even be with them any longer — parents, teachers, coaches and so on. There isn’t enough unconditional love. If there were, there would be less dissatisfaction and depression and more good in the world. <<

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Core skills for new managers

How to help rising stars wear a closet full of hats **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

Senior leaders struggle to provide new managers with the operating framework they need to make sense of the world they face when stepping up from subject matter expert and individual contributor to the realm of management and leadership.

“The challenge for new managers is to be able to work effectively in differing contexts that sometimes occur in the same day, for different lengths of time, with different priorities or risks attached,” says Richard Egan, senior consulting partner, The Ken Blanchard Companies®. “The result is that new managers, with good intentions at heart, do what comes naturally or imitate the leadership style observed in other leaders.”

Smart Business learned more from Egan about three key contexts faced by new managers and described in the book, “Achieve Leadership Genius,” by Drea Zigarmi, Susan Fowler and Dick Lyles. Egan explained why new managers must understand that who, what, where and when you manage and lead should determine how you manage and lead.

What challenges are faced by SMEs moving into management?

An individual worker or team member focuses primarily on his or her job at hand. That job is usually one in which he or she has received extensive training and is a proven subject matter expert. These workers also are passionate about their chosen field. On becoming a new manager, they often find themselves in fast-paced, changing circumstances — or changing contexts — in which they are required not only to continue to manage themselves effectively but to also manage others and lead.

What happens to new managers in the leading self context?

Self leadership is about having the skill and the mindset to accept responsibility and take the initiative for succeeding in your work-related role. The self context is the one in which new managers are most familiar as they have been excelling as individual contributors before their promotion. However, the challenge now is to use and apply the skills of being a self leader to the new role of manager and leader. These skills include



Richard Egan
Senior consulting partner
The Ken Blanchard Companies

aligning their personal mission, creating a personal performance plan that includes clarity of ‘key responsibility areas’ and goals, identification of needs for direction and support, and effective management of time and energy so performance and satisfaction are maximized. Self leaders also seek out a mentor relationship to help navigate the path forward. One common challenge for the new manager in the self context is to juggle new management and leadership responsibilities while continuing to make individual contributions as a subject matter expert.

When must new managers first handle more complex interactions?

This occurs in the one-to-one context. It’s more complex as it involves interacting with others who may be similar to or different from the new manager in terms of personality, skills, needs and motivations. A new manager may be required to perform various roles depending upon the needs of others and the immediate situation. The roles could include supervisor, teacher, coach, mentor or friend. Key skills in this context include: the ability to clarify roles, priorities and performance standards of others; impart knowledge

and develop skills of others; manage the performance of and give feedback to others; and have challenging conversations with others when performance or behavior is not on track. A typical challenge the new manager faces in this context is to work effectively with others who were former peers, colleagues and friends. Moving from being one of the ‘gang’ to being the leader is sometimes a tricky transition that requires thought, intent and skill.

What is the most difficult context for new managers?

The team context is exponentially more complex. Here, the new manager is asked to galvanize a number of individuals all potentially with different personalities, skills, needs and motivations to achieve a common purpose. The focus is collective and the new manager has to work on maximizing two group constructs — team productivity and morale. A variety of roles may need to be performed including those of trainer, facilitator, mediator and cheerleader. Key skills include the ability to provide a team with structure such as purpose, tactics, norms, methods of communication, and the ability to manage group dynamics and manage effective meetings — both face-to-face and virtual. A common challenge new managers face in the team context is to lead cross-functional teams. This requires the manager to negotiate resource allocation from different departments, manage the performance of individuals on the team who report to a different function manager and develop the team as a whole when members’ allegiances may lie with their individual functions.

How can new managers increase their chances for success?

For new managers, developing effectiveness in the self, one-to-one and team contexts is the priority. If they can first diagnose the current context in which they are operating and then have a number of relevant skills to deploy, they will increase their chances of managing and leading effectively. <<

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Cleared for takeoff

How to accelerate the productivity of new hires **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

When leaving the runway for a first-ever solo flight, nervous and excited flying students can only trust that their instructor provided all of the skills and knowledge required to fly the pattern. But even if you hired the best candidates, if you're not willing to be "in the plane" with them, teaching them everything they need to be successful, there's a good chance they're going to be in for a bumpy landing.

"When you hire peak performers, the tendency is to share with them what they need to do, and then leave them alone to go do it," says Dr. Victoria Halsey, vice president, Applied Learning, The Ken Blanchard Companies®. "This has an incredibly negative impact on new hires."

Smart Business recently spoke with Halsey to learn more about how to accelerate the productivity of new hires through coaching, creating effective relationships, and understanding how they best learn.

What early steps can help set up new hires to succeed more quickly?

What people don't realize is that new hires may be very excited to be there, but they are actually brand new at the bulk of what they're working on. In Situational Leadership® II language, we call them 'enthusiastic beginners.' To ramp people up more quickly, you need to rapidly focus them on the most important things they need to do and when, and then help them get with others who are also going to teach them how. They need a comprehensive on-boarding and action plan with examples of what a good job looks like, clear timelines and priorities. It's also important to help them develop the relationships that will accelerate their growth and share 'how we get things done around here.'

How do supportive and directive behaviors propel learners past the disillusioned learner phase?

New hires encounter a second wave a few weeks after the initial 'Bring it on,



Dr. Victoria Halsey
Vice president
Applied Learning
The Ken Blanchard Companies

I'm so excited' phase. They hit the wall thinking, 'Wow, this is trickier than I thought.' Now they need someone there to coach them through their flagging motivation.

When they are feeling discouraged, they need to know 'why' what they are doing is so important. They need praise for their progress and either reteaching or redirection to build competence.

What are the benefits of teaching the Situational Leadership® II model?

One of the benefits of teaching the Situational Leadership® II model to new hires is to have them see the stages of development they're going to go through as they learn to be proficient in their tasks and goals. They need to know that when they first take on a task, they're going to be excited, though may not know what to do — but then someone is going to give them very meticulous direction. They also need to know that they're going to become a 'disillusioned learner' and receive coaching. They need to know

they're going to reach a time when they can do what it is they're striving to do but not feel fully confident about it, so someone is going to help them with a supporting leadership style to help them step into their power.

Why should new hires learn to say, 'I need'?

You should be teaching new hires to come to you and ask for what they need. The Ken Blanchard Companies' research shows that 54 percent of managers tend to use just one style naturally before training, while 34 percent use two styles, 11 percent use three styles, and only 1 percent of the population use all four leadership styles. One reason new hires aren't brought up to speed as fast as people would like them to be is that leaders aren't giving them the specific direction they may need because it isn't the natural style of the leader. New hires can help managers to flex their leadership style to both directive and supportive by learning to say, 'I need.'

How can leaders diagnose others to best accelerate the development of new hires?

Developing optimal performance means knowing your people. Great leaders switch their attention from what they feel like doing when their people say, 'I need help,' to thinking about the person and the specific task or goal. Great leaders discover what people really need in terms of direction and support to move to the next stage, and then follow through by giving it to them. Finally, great leaders notice the good things people are doing, find what's unique in their people and call it out with specific, descriptive praise. What is their goal? To make people feel brilliant and have early wins. <<

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