

Leading, Following and Team Dynamics

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"Change occurs when one becomes what one is, not when one tries to become what one is not" —Arnold R. Beisser

Bennis Warren G. in his book "Managing the Dream: Reflections on leadership and change" Cambridge, MA: Perseus.1985 Wrote that:

"To survive in the 21st century, we are going to need a new generation of leaders— leaders, not managers"

The distinction is an important one. Leaders conquer the context—the volatile, turbulent, ambiguous surroundings that seem to conspire against us and will surely suffocate us if we let them—while managers' surrender to it. There are other differences, as well, and they are critical

- The manager administers; the leader innovates
- The manager is a copy; the leader is an original
- The manager maintains; the leader develops
- The manager focuses on systems and structure; the leader focuses on people
- The manager relies on control; leader inspires trust
- The manager has a short range view; the leader has a long range perspective
- The manager asks how and when; the leader asks what and why
- The manager has his eye on the bottom line; the leader has his eye on the horizon
- The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it
- The manager is the classic good soldier; the leader is the own person
- The manager does the things right; the leader does the right thing"

So, what do we want to become—a good leader or a good manager for showing excellence in our institutions?

Leading by example is what is needed for the organization to excel. There are many definitions for the leaders and leadership, some of them are as follows: -

1 A leader is one who motivates, communicates who is autocratic, participate, laissez-free (non-leadership), trustworthy and honest. The one who has integrity, professional competence and intelligence is in a true sense an effective leader. (www.leadership-dynamics.com/leader2/sld005.htm)

2. Leadership involves establishing direction by developing a vision of future in different scenarios. A great leader needs to have a vision, an ability to inspire a concern for people, and a desire to achieve the targeted goals. (www.goto.com-leadership)

3. Leadership is defined as "the process of persuasion or example by which an individual influences a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the followers." (www.gulftel.com/~lwjones/scouts/ldr_ski0.html)

4. "Leadership is the ability and willingness to influence others so that they respond willingly", Clawson (2000, page 27)

5. "Leadership is the art of getting people to want to-do something you are convinced should be done"—Vance Packard

Whatever be the definition be and whoever defined the leadership, the crux of these definitions is that the leader should be a good motivator, good communicator, a good persuader, a visionary, participative, and honest. For being a good motivator, persuader, and participative he should be a good communicator and should know how to work in groups and the about the dynamics of group.

Organizational learning is nothing but detection and correction of errors and it can only be accomplished through effective communication. Planning and communication are two important aspects of leadership and group dynamics.

For an effective communication to happen the leader should know how to connect with his/ her subordinates through a good dialogue, as good dialogue helps in discussing the undiscussable and helps in bringing in synergy. Dialogue helps in resolving the issues related to polarity.

The necessary conditions for a good dialogue are
✓All must suspend assumptions
✓All must regard each other as esteemed colleagues and
✓There must be a facilitator who holds the contest of dialogue

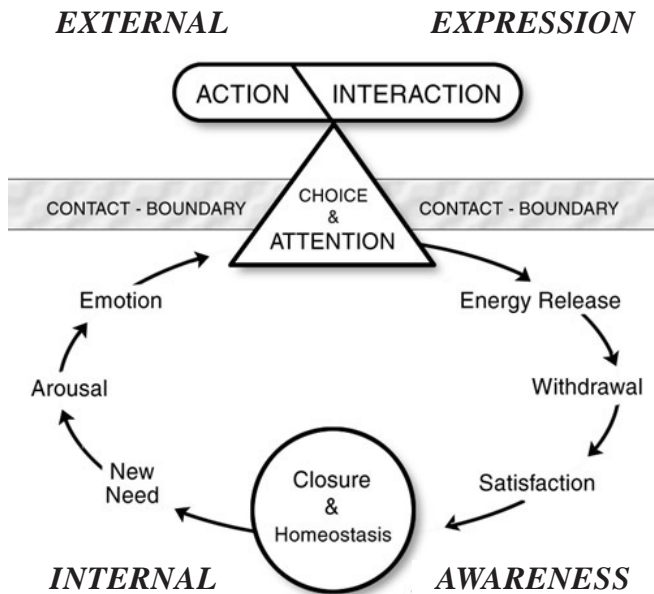
Issac mentioned that there are 4 competencies for a good dialogue, they are

- 1.Listen deeply
- 2.Respect the other person
- 3.Suspend judgements and assumptions
4. Voicing courageously

Physical and psychological presence (this is what generally seen during meetings—staff may be physically present, but they are psychologically absent) of the subordinates can be achieved

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through good dialogue with them. Effective dialogue helps in fulfilling the **psychological needs** of the subordinates. Effective dialogue (good communication) with the **physically** and **psychologically present** subordinates helps in making a good contact with their internal awareness process (urge to tell some thing & / to participate) and their external expressions. A conducive communication environment helps in bringing out the ideas of the sub-ordinates as it helps in discussing the undiscussable, as explained by the following diagram



Source: <http://www.afn.org/~gestalt/aa.ntm>

In the above diagram the **internal awareness process** is what is going on in the minds of the reticent but experienced people who are working in our institutions, where as the **contact boundary** is the **psychological barrier** that is not allowing them to speak out their views (**external expressions**).

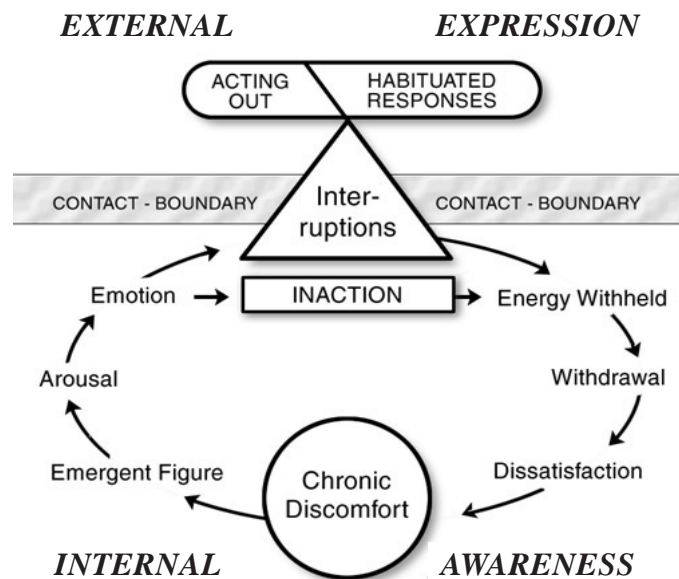
If attention is paid to the suggestions of the experienced taciturn subordinates of the zoo it helps in the release of positive energy (in the form of positive and valuable inputs) and even if some of them are adopted/ appreciated it helps in the fulfilment of their self actualization needs to a larger extent leading to a greater feeling of homeostasis.

This process will further help in:

1. Stirring of new psychological needs within them to excel and in long-term will help them to emotionally attach with their organizations and
2. In pushing the ideas of the organization without any plausible resistance from the workforce.

Thus the effective dialogue helps in promoting positive actions and interactions with the strengths /weaknesses (subordinates) of the organization, which helps in excelling themselves in the spheres of good animal management, health management, visitor management, sound financial management (by minimizing wastages etc), knowledge creation, knowledge management, knowledge retention and it further helps in imbuing the feelings into the subordinates **that they are valued and are respected by the organization**.

On the contrary if the leaders are not engaged effectively with their subordinates the following is bound to happen.



Source: <http://www.afn.org/~gestalt/aa.htm>

As depicted above if the ideas of the sub-ordinates are not heard and valued; simmering discomfort in them will lead to **inactions and habituated responses** amongst the subordinates—a situation leads to anarchy, dis-attachment with the institution, blaming, shoulding, interrupting, generalizing, shifting the focus of the meeting, reacting defensively, suppressing feelings etc. Where as on the contrary the effective communication brings in owning the responsibilities, promoting active listening, creating a feeling of safety and promotes the people to take risks.

Engaging people in good dialogue sometimes is very difficult, as a number of behavioural issues like splitting and projection, Projective Identification, Introjection, Polarity, Basic assumption modes of-dependency, flight/fight, and pairing, etc creep in during dialogue process. A brief about these issues are discussed as below: -

Sigmund Freud described **splitting and projection** of super ego in group's life. According to him unconsciously every individual splits off and gets rid off a bad feeling or an unacceptable aspect of their personality, which he doesn't want to own them to be theirs and projects them on to other person or thing. Melanie Klein (1946) coined the term **Projective Identification**; she referred it to *getting rid of parts of individual with in his/her own mind* (Tom Main 1975). Projections are generally due to the accumulated anxiety which might have been created through his/her experiences and his/her defensive mechanisms.

Bion took this concept a bit further to **inter personal relations**. A person with **ready receptors (valency)** Bion mentioned that every individual has a certain degree of valency) for receiving unconscious communications from others and take the same size and shape receives them (Willshire, 1999, Rioch, 1970). During this unconscious interactive process different people behave differently (Tyson 1998). Some choose to *absorb projection*; some *gets hooked on to projector's fantasy*, people with high ego strength and resources *strongly retaliate*. **All these behavioural responses of the members are responsible for the initial heated arguments, criticisms, grouping of ideologically similar persons within the group, disagreement over issues, and some don't express their ideas at all during meetings.**

These unconscious action and counter actions go on and on till some resolutions occur, or till energy gets drained off. During this process task goes into background and the group slips in to *Basic assumption modes of dependency (over the leader), flight/ fight (amongst themselves and on the leader), and pairing (among participating individuals)*.

Under these circumstances the following are some of the **intervention strategies** that can be adopted by the leader in order to bring the group into working group mode, they are:-

1. The leader has to facilitate discussing the undiscussable so that people ease out their tensions. He should provide an ample opportunity for *dialogue*, which will help in people speaking with full **awareness** and speaking **from their inner zones** without being interrupted and listeners to listen deeply, valuing the speaker, suspending their assumptions and judgements and finally voicing courageously (all **ingredients for an effective dialogue**). This will help the participants to show their **psychological presence** (Batros, 1994) and resulting **radical openness** (Batros, 2000) will help in identifying and resolving **polarity**. With this kind of effective dialogue unwanted **figures** will be addressed, which are nothing to do with the task, and the task will be achieved.

2. As our elders rightly said that speech is silver and silence is gold, **silence** can be used as a good intervention strategy if the team meetings are turbulent.

Many writers interpreted **silence** in different ways some of the interpretations are:-

"The silence, often of pure innocence

Persuades when speaking fails" (Bentley, 2000.p.78)

Silence according to Bentley (2000) plays a crucial role in leading process. It falls under supportive category of intervention. According to him, leader can use silence for the *purposes of reflection, meditation, thinking, awareness, encouraging action, and empowering involvement*. Leader in dealing with frustration can use silence as a powerful tool.

According to Schein (p 97) ... "one of the most important interventions one can decide to make is to **remain silent** and continues to observe what's going on. Remaining silent in active listening mode may not be seen as intervention, but in fact it may be *crucial in order to minimize risks of misperception, inappropriate emotional reactions, and biased judgments"*

3. When it is not possible for managing through manipulation and control, leader must create a containing work place, wherein, group members should be able to introject and metabolise each other's anxieties. Leader should internalise and metabolise task related anxieties of colleagues, rather than enacting them so that agitated colleagues are able to see a modified experience through **introjective identifications** (Willshire, 1999).

Let me explain the difficult terms like introjections and introjective identifications:

Introjection is a defence mechanism, through which one may attempt to resolve an emotional conflict by placement of a mental representation of an object inside the psyche. This structure is defined as introject object or introject. This is considered to be an adaptive process, which leads to increased autonomy. (www.behavenet.com/capsules/treatments/analytic/introjectiveid.htm)

Introjective identification is the process through which one may attempt to resolve an emotional conflict by pretending to merge with the object.

Bion suggests that the primary function of a group is to be a good container for the feelings and frustrations of its members he further suggests that better the container the more thought would evolve and the less evacuation is necessary. (www.gappractice.org.uk/cynthia.htm)

An effective leader, for better group results, should try to create containing atmosphere, through contact-full communication he should try to resolve conflicts and aggression. If the group as a whole develops introjective identifications (sympathising with the cause i.e. task in hand), it is good for better team dynamics.

The leader of the group should know that during group meetings the following are bound to happen, they are: -

1. Members have to acknowledge and resolve *polarity* issues (Tyson, 1998), and then only they can achieve *holistic approach*. If **polarity issues** are not resolved **figures (distortions)** continuously start appearing out from **ground**. Frew (1996) mentions that if figures are properly addressed then they will not reappear repeatedly; according to him "*individual's need at a particular moment greatly influence figure formation*".

2. Leader of the group should appreciate that **resistance** is a normal behavioural process. According to Yaro Starak (2000) (<http://www.gestaltinstitute.com.au>) *resistance is due to the internal struggle of individual to meet one's needs*, in his words "*healthy functioning is based on the relationship that we have with our environment and how we develop ways of either engaging with our resources or manipulating them to our personal advantage. This internal struggle to meet our needs causes us to adapt our behaviour in ways that inhibit our healthy functioning*"

For getting into Frew's **affiliation phase (characterised by affection, support, cooperation, interdependency)** leader and follower of group have to actively consider the following points

1. Bentley argues "to develop congruence I believe in developing a relationship with group based on what I describe as a loving **TOUCH**". The word TOUCH stands for **T**rust, **O**penness, **U**nderstanding, **C**onfidentiality, and **H**onesty.

He further argues, "*Congruence* does represent free, open and honest coming together of people and making close and effective contact—this means fully aware communicating thoughts and feelings and sharing fully in the experience of contact"—thus the leader must develop Bentley's TOUCH and develop skills like **Anticipation, Communication and Trust (ACT)**,

2. Buber's I- Thou relations are possible only when a person acknowledges the other as a **valued individual**, then only there can be a contact-full communication between members of group. From the members' side they must develop **Isaac's four competencies of dialogue** then only enormous energy (synergy) gets released.

3. Dialogue plays a very important role in bringing out best out of the members of group. Issues like awareness, acknowledging and sorting out polarity issues, help in **reducing distortions (figures)** for the group process. Active cooperation among members helps in achieving synergy.

4. In the initial phases leader has to orient group and make the members feel secure and accepted. For it he has to explain task properly, minimize conflicts, listen to followers needs, and share their anxiety.

5. For achieving unified whole members must have *contact in between their inner and outer worlds*, an essence for **awareness** (Batros, 2000)

6. Contact-full communication helps in resolving issues of polarity, reducing figures and projections, which ultimately help the group to achieve their goals.

7. Followers must show readiness, willingness and ability on their part to achieve group goals.

8. As Willshire (1999) mentioned Members of the group be able to introject and metabolise each other's anxieties for having a containing work place.

9. The leader shouldn't see **resistance as rebellion** against his authority, as the authoritative working style never allow to empower and engage the subordinates in decision making, which promotes **skilled incompetency** with in the organization.

10. Importance of psychological presence, dialogic communication.

11. Leader must know that he is a follower as well.

12. As Perls described "*Lose your mind and come to your senses*" leader and followers should follow this **mantra** religiously for obtaining group objectives.

If the group adheres to generally accepted norms, and follow the above principles they will get "**aha**" experience with the release of synergy.



Source: <http://www.gurteen.com/gurteen/gurteen.nsf>.

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3. www.gapractice.org.uk/cynthia.htm
4. <http://www.gurteen.com/gurteen/gurteen.nsf>

Further Reading:

1. **Skilled Incompetence:** Chris Argyris; as appeared in *Harvard Business Review* volume 64, Number 5; September-October 1986
2. **"Working with groups"** a text book written by Trevor Tyson published by Macmillan Australia Pty Ltd

Definitions of Terms used in the document

1. Synergy: It occurs when the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (for example $1+1=11$). What energy is to the individual, synergy is to the group. It is that state sometimes achieved by a pair or group of people where their wholeness is perceived and felt to be greater than the sum of the parts: a powerfully experienced "we" feeling. The converse, negative synergy, can occur if the group lacks coordination or performs poorly *because* they are a group and can not *'get their act together'*.

2. Polarity: Individuals and groups alike are characterized by polarities: competent / incompetent, dependent/autonomous, courageous / fearful, caring / hating and so on. In most cases they are pervasive, usually unconscious, desire to ignore or deny the negative aspect.

3. Figure and ground: Out of the whole 'sensory field' which is internal to and surrounds an individual or a group at any given movement, attention is constantly being drawn to one aspect or another that emerges from the background and captures our attention—a sound, an object, something spoken, an idea, a goal, an anticipated reward or response. The process of recognizing any object or pattern first involves distinguishing it from its surroundings, that is, it must be seen as an emerging 'figure' against a background. A raising need usually triggers what is to become 'figural' in the individual's field. Miscommunication between people can often be attributed to one not understanding what is figural for the other in their discussion. When need is satisfied by appropriate behaviour, or when a figure understood or attended to, it recedes to make way for the next one to emerge.

4. Basic assumption of dependency: members of the group collude to act as if they know nothing, are inadequate or immature. Their behaviour implies that the leader is all-powerful, loving and wise and is supposed to lead them to success with little or no effort on their part.

5. Basic assumption of flight/fight: members of the group collude either to quarrel, rebel or brawl or to withdraw into silence, diversions, day dreams, or apathy as if they have met in order to resist some dire threat by standing together to fight it, or by fleeing from it. Hostility is often directed by the group members towards the leader, while flight is usually from the demands of task. In either case the group feels threatened, becomes increasingly anxious, and begins to regress to a primitive defensive state.

6. Basic assumption of pairing: members collude with each other to focus on any two who might have formed an attachment to each other. There is an air of hopeful expectancy - never fulfilled, but kept alive nonetheless — that somebody might come and form a new order.

(These concepts are taken from a book titled *"Working with groups"* written by Trevor Tyson published by Macmillan Australia Pty Ltd)

7. Valency: is the ready receptor within an individual for unconscious communication from others. According to Bion (the person who coined the term) valency corresponds to cooperation in the group. Cooperation requires thought, training, maturity, and some degree of organization within the group, where as valency requires none of these, it simply occurs spontaneously as a function of the gregarious quality of the man. Individuals vary in their degree of valency.