

Creating a Climate for Coaching and Organisational Effectiveness

Introduction

The nature of leadership within 21st Century organizations is to make things happen, to make more and better from less, whilst ensuring that the people involved remain self motivated. The concept of perfection for many organizations is a culture of drive, teamwork, improvement and innovation, customer focus, sustainable performance and ever increasing shareholder value. This is paralleled by sustainable self-leadership at all levels where people can align themselves to the higher level of direction and make relevant decisions quickly. In short a **Legacy of Leadership**[™] is created.

Whilst this may be considered an organizations' nirvana, the question begs as to how this could be achieved effectively and simply across all levels. What does this climate need to be or indeed look and feel like to within our teams and organization in order to develop others, create initiative and optimise self-leadership at all levels?

Climate consists of two components; the *being* in terms of culture as well as the *doing* aspect of systems and processes. How can leaders as coaches cultivate this climate both by behaviour and processes whilst aiming for results, productivity and a high performing workforce?



A clue to some of the answers lies within the well documented case studies of Toyota Motors and its ability to outperform its competitors in quality, reliability, productivity, sales, market share growth and market capitalization.

In terms of global market share Toyota has recently overtaken Ford to become the second largest car maker and employs over 36,000 employees in North America alone. Underpinning this success is The Toyota Production System (TPS) which is at the heart of everything the organization does. It is based on the concept of continuous improvement, or 'kaizen', where every Toyota team member is empowered with the ability to improve their work environment and includes all facets from quality and safety to the environment and productivity.

However Toyota is famous for not only its production system but also its great managers and despite the fact that Toyota has been widely studied and copied there are few organizations that have come anywhere near in

matching its performance. Why? Attention has often focused on the Toyota's technical processes, tools and tactics such as pull systems, cords and production cells but not on its basic set of operating principles which underpin its higher philosophy of ensuring that regular work is coupled with learning how to do the work better. In effect a self-managed coaching climate is created across all levels of the organization which becomes the corner stone of Toyota's success.

The Principle

Toyota aims to make its production line a series of discrete on-going experiments whether on the routine installation of car seats or the highly complex task of designing or launching a new model or factory.

Clarity is created of how the work is going to be done *before* it is performed together with testing the processes as it is being done. This results in immediately identifying the gaps between expectations and results which in turn enables problems to be contained effectively. The climatic impact is that a deeper understanding of the product, process and people is gained, which is incorporated into new developments or specification. This becomes a temporary best practice until a new problem is discovered.

Recognising that the Toyota Production System is about applying principles rather than tools enables companies that in no way resemble Toyota to tap into its source of success. Alcoa for example applied similar principles to its refining and smelting processes saving the company \$1.1 billion from 1998 to 2000, while improving safety, productivity and quality.

The Process

It is one thing to understand the TPS principle through which operations are constantly improved. It is another to have an organisation in which employees and management at all levels and functions are able to live those principles and coach others to apply it.

The answer lies in a process which applies to all new employees regardless of rank or function.

They learn the TPS the long, hard way – by practicing it, sometimes as long as three months before arriving at the plant in which they would be assigned – much more than the brief period of cursory walk-throughs, orientations and introductions that an incoming fast track executive might expect.

The Program

On arriving at the Toyota's HQ, a prospective manager is partnered with a senior manager who is responsible for mentoring their orientation within the organization. After formalities, new managers engage in twelve intensive weeks within a separate engine plant and ten days making observations within the Toyota supplier plants in Japan. The content of the training is based upon what in the mentor's judgment, the new manager needs.



The initial part of the training process focuses upon the task of helping a small group of engine-assembly workers improve labour productivity, operational availability of machines, equipment and ergonomic safety. During the first six weeks the new manager was engaged in cycles of observing and changing individuals work processes. This included detailed documentation of how different tasks were carried out, who did what tasks under what circumstances and how much information, material and services were communicated. Changes were made and their benefit evaluated.

These observations were set within the context of a structured working week. Mondays see the new manager highlight his observations of the previous week, suggest changes and outline the expected impact of his recommendations. On Fridays the mentor reviews the new managers plans making a strong comparison between expected and actual outcomes.

The second half of the training focuses on the technical operations with observations upon how machines operated or more importantly faulted. Direct observation of devices, root-cause analysis of each fault and immediate reconfiguration to remove suspected causes raised operational ability.



The final part of training or 'master class' occurs in the famous Kamigo engine plant in Japan. Here new managers work alongside an employee in a production cell and are asked to make 50 improvements – actual changes in how work was done –during their time there. This can focus for example on how to reduce the 'overburden' of the worker such as walking, reaching and other efforts that don't add value to the product

- an emphasis which focuses on the impact of the work design on the person, rather than suggesting that then person is the problem. This involved significant buy-in from the non- English speaking worker. This was often compared with observations from more junior Japanese team leaders to heighten awareness. This increased the ability to identify and resolve problems and see the interactions of the individuals within the



production cell as a whole providing a more holistic approach. The training is concluded with the new manager presenting his findings with the plant manager, machine shop manager and shop's group leaders. The Toyota culture expects that people at all levels structure work and improvements as experiments.

The Lessons Learned

Often new managers are not explicitly told what they will learn from their training but the consistent methodology used reveals four fundamental principles:

1. There's no substitute for direct observation

It is sometimes easy to presume and assume the reasons for failure from reports, interviews, surveys and the like. Direct observation of people and processes gives the opportunity to see the inner workings and thus assess more precisely recommendations to support development.

2. Proposed changes should always be structured as experiments

Many people trying to improve a process have some idea of what the problems are and how to fix them. The difference with TPS is that it seeks to fully understand both the problem and the solution. Precision and deeper investigation around a structured methodology can create greater individual and collective initiative generating an organizational momentum which strives for excellence.

3. Workers and managers should experiment as frequently as possible

At Toyota, the focus is on many quick, simple experiments rather than on a few lengthy, complex ones. This encourages individuals to make small incremental changes rather than large system-design changes. What

underpins this is not making a multitude of changes but observing and testing to make the right changes. Learning the process at Toyota starts with the simple and moves with time to the more complex. By keeping the learning cycle small and bounded with precise feedback, the learner can make mistakes and the consequences will not be severe, thus increasing the learner's willingness to take risks and learn by doing

4. Managers should coach and not fix

The training at Toyota gives an insight into how the organization gives continuous improvement and the unique relationships between Toyota's managers and workers. Workers and low-level managers work together to constantly solve problems. Indeed the more senior the manager, the less likely he was to be solving problems himself.



Toyota managers act as enablers through creating the conditions for their team members to be successful. The basic company philosophy is that any operating system can be improved if every level are looking and experimenting closely.

A senior managers aim should not be to make direct improvements himself but to produce a cadre of excellent group leaders who learn through continuous experimentation. It is this unique climate both in terms of doing and being that enables self-leadership to occur at all levels throughout the organization.

Teruyuki Minoura, Senior managing Director, Toyota Motor Group, echoes this sentiment.

"There can be no successful monozukuri (making thing) without hito-zukuri (making people). To keep coming up with revolutionary new production techniques, we need to develop unique ideas and knowledge by thinking about problems in terms of genchi genbutsu (hands-on experience). This means it's necessary to think about how we can develop people who can come up with these ideas. As our operations become increasingly global, there's also a need to think how to implant the Toyota DNA in our overseas personnel. It's important to create a climate in which people are trained to follow rules and standards as if they were second nature."

Application of the principles to other organizations and industries



How can the principles of the TPS be successfully applied within organizations and teams outside of the manufacturing industry in order to create a climate for coaching and organizational effectiveness?

What insights can be gleaned by managers understanding the Toyota DNA in order to create their own coaching legacy?

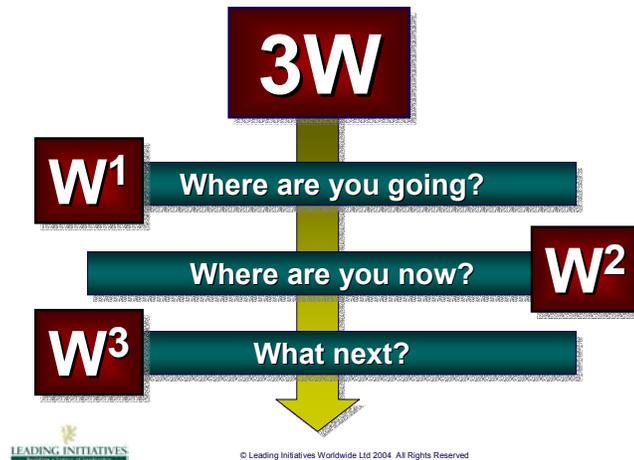


There are various methods for developing people. At one end of the spectrum there is instruction for those who are new to a skill or activity. At the other end of the expertise spectrum there is self-managed learning in which people ask the coaching questions of themselves, problem solve effectively and progress forward without further intervention. In between there is the **coaching zone**. Regular exposure to effective coaching

enables people to ask the coaching questions of themselves, demonstrate initiative, take risks and effectively self-lead.

A process which supports the development of this climate is the **3W's** model. A simple, probing model, it gives managers a powerful tool to transit their team members through the coaching zone and provides a sustaining process which individuals at all levels can use to manage themselves in day to day tasks. These questions can be asked by a manager to their team member or by the individual themselves. They can also be incorporated within a more complex performance coaching process.

Creating the Coaching Climate



- **W¹ Where are you going?** – Individuals need to clarify the direction they are seeking whether it be in terms of the broader, macro context or specifics of the task in hand. Gaining a clear understanding of this direction places the present situation or problem in a more relevant context and encourages the individual to take greater initiative.

- **W² Where are you now?** – Once clarity has been gained in terms of what you are trying to

achieve, the next question focuses upon the presenting situation or circumstance. Deeper analysis of the root causes can be gained by applying the 3C's, Clarity, Climate and Competence to generate a deeper understanding.

- **W³ What next?** – What are the possible options available to you? Often individuals have the answer but lack the confidence or willingness to express it or probe further. Asking the question of

them develops greater assurance and resourcefulness for the future and supports them to self-lead.

The coaching process is also supported by processes which provide effective feedback to support individual development and achieve organizational objectives. Once again this impacts the Climate by creating a culture which accepts and encourages feedback as a major catalyst for growth.

Feedback can sometimes be construed negatively but utilised within an effective structure, can create a climate of openness, risk taking, initiative and excellence rather than fear and mistrust. The word 'feedback' means literally to nourish, grow and develop.

If the intention is for feedback to generate these results as opposed to a display of superiority or righteousness, the person receiving the feedback will only stand to gain. Thus the term 'constructive feedback' gains its term.

The feedback process can exist as a discrete process or within the coaching structure, It can occur face to face via phone or email, although due to the distant nature of the latter two, mis-interpretations and communications can occur. Often body language is key in communicating key messages.

The EIC model below provides a framework with which to work with which can be used independently or as part of the 3W's coaching structure.

Example

Be specific about the examples – rely on first hand data or evidence rather than anecdotes from third parties.

Impact

When looking at the impact – create a greater sense of responsibility for the person receiving feedback by asking them the impact – this often proves more effective than telling them and can gain greater buy-in.

Giving Feedback

- **Intention** – What do you want to achieve
- **Example** – What was said or done/not done
- **Impact** – What was the result or impact
- **Change** – What needs to change/continue
- **Acknowledge** – Thanks for the opportunity/feedback

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Change

Work with the individual to look at alternatives and ways to change. A trap can be to only seeing feedback as about delivering what went wrong or didn't happen – consciously making an effort to give feedback on positive aspects with the resulting impact is fundamental to shaping others behaviour. A small investment can reap large rewards.

The *being* aspect of leadership focuses upon the impact on climate by the leaders behaviour. Thus, as in Toyota, it is the practise of asking and receiving feedback discretely or within the coaching structures by the leader that will generate the willingness and momentum to exist within the organisation.