It’s not your father’s (or mother’s) work world

TRENDS IN ORGANIZATIONS

- Differentiated customers
- Workforce diversity
- Increased competition
- Flexibility
- Cut costs
- Quicker response time
- Flat org
- Networked
- Changing demographics
- Globalization
- Saturated markets
- Exploit regional cost/expertise/needs differences
- Better information technology
- Complex products
- Better communication, and transportation technology
- Fast changing customer needs
- Fast pace of change

TRENDS IN ORGANIZATIONS
The result: boundary spanners are key

VERTICAL
Across levels and hierarchy

HORIZONTAL
Across functions and expertise

STAKEHOLDER
Beyond boundaries of the company with external partners

DEMOGRAPHIC
Across diverse groups (e.g. gender, ethnic, nationality)

GEOGRAPHIC
Across regions and locality

What differentiates boundary spanners: Communication
Communication isn’t part of the job—it *is* the job

- Average leader spends 85-90% of their time communicating
- Communication skills are cited most often as the key differentiator of potential and performance
- In global, matrix organizations, effective communication is even more challenging—and even more essential

“Leaders must be entrepreneurs of meaning and architects of collaboration.”
— Gary Hamel
What do we know about what makes people effective communicators and boundary-spanners?

What's above the surface is the content and presentation of the message.

What's under the surface is the psychological, neurological, and emotional context of the communication.
Looking “under the surface”

- Google study
- Neuroscience
- Social science
Google Study on Effective Teams—Why?

- Google noticed that its practice of “hiring the best” and putting them together as a team doesn’t work consistently
- Nearly all of the focus of HR talent management practices is on the individual— and yet...
  - Collaborative activities are essential to almost every role inside the modern corporation
  - Nearly all “business outcomes driver” work is collaborative in nature
  - Matrixed organizations are the norm, not the exception
- Some managers and leaders seem to be consistently better than others at building great teams and enabling effective collaboration
- Some teams seemed to be better than others despite weak or inexperienced or even missing managers/leader
Google looked at groups that were ranked among Google’s most effective teams and found:

- Some were composed of friends who socialized outside work
- Others were made up of people who were basically strangers away from the conference room
- Some groups had strong managers
- Others had little to no “management”

Most confounding of all, two teams might have nearly identical makeups, with overlapping memberships, but radically different levels of effectiveness.

“At Google, we’re good at finding patterns, There weren’t strong patterns here.”
Shift from “Individual” to “Group Norms”

- Lots of solid research that “group norms” are the key to unlocking “collective intelligence”
- After looking at over 100 groups for over a year, Google researchers shifted focus to look at “group norms” as the potential key to team success
- Google identified dozens of behaviors that seemed important
- Only problem: the data sometimes pointed in opposite directions
- Great teams didn’t obviously share the same norms:
  - Was it better to let everyone speak as much as they wanted, or should strong leaders end meandering debates? **Yes.**
  - Was it more effective for people to openly disagree with one another, or should conflicts be played down? **Yes.**
- But, if you dig deeper, there are key norms that differentiate team performance—and unlock “collective intelligence”
Unlocking Collective Intelligence—Essentials

Psychological safety

A team climate characterized by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves; a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking

Specific ways this shows up in teams:

- Social sensitivity—i.e., intuiting how others feel based on their tone of voice, their expressions and other nonverbal cues
- Conversational turn-taking—i.e., everyone gets about the same time to speak and everyone practices good listening

The foundational and essential capabilities:

- Empathy
- Compassion
- Interpersonal communication
- Authenticity
Neuroscience findings

People perform better in the “presence” of others.

Oxytocin—the “bonding hormone”—builds in relationships over time through re-occurring positive experiences.

Novelty is perceived as threat neurologically—Oxytocin reduces anxiety-based threat response and increases “intelligent” response to threat.

Successful new entrants seek first to “fit in” and bond with the group—new ideas are perceived as threats until the trust is built.

High trust/High expectations creates a “force field” that facilitates consistently high performance.
Looking “above the surface”

- Communication mores have really changed—and continue to evolve
- Information overload everywhere, all the time
- Key “new realities”—what’s essential for communication to be effective
  - Audience, audience, audience
  - Context and why
  - The power of plot
  - Trust trumps “position”
So what do you “do” with all of this?

- Working “under the surface”
- Working “above the surface”
So what do you “do” with all of this?

Working “under the surface”

- Cultivate awareness of self and others
- Demonstrate empathy and compassion
- Show up with authenticity
- Make space for others to show up with authenticity
- Nurture high-expectations
So what do you “do” with all of this?

Working “above the surface”

- **Listen** holistically
- Frame your communication, provide context, say why
- Make the **plotline** simple and clear
- Ensure the emotional tone doesn’t erode trust
- Build **positive “lore”** — reputation and personal brand
Questions / Discussion
People will forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.

— Terry Pearce
Author of Leading from Within
Thank you
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