



Collaborations

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Book Corner

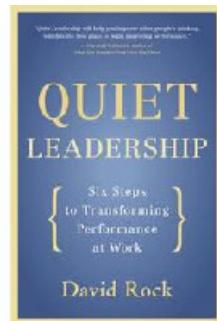
***Quiet Leadership* by David Rock**

A colleague gave me a copy of *Quiet Leadership* and told me that executives she works with were finding the concepts very useful in their leadership role. So, I read the book and have already been using some ideas from it when coaching clients.

The premise of Rock's work is that we can improve the performance of employees by focusing on improving their thinking. The only way to change others, of course, is to change the way we interact with them. Instead of telling them what to do, Rock suggests we help them think better.

Rock's six steps to transforming performance are:

1. Think about thinking
2. Listen for potential
3. Speak with intent
4. Dance toward insight
5. Create new thinking
6. Follow Up



While Rock provides a number of very practical suggestions for each step, here are two that I found particularly interesting. In Step 2, in order to listen for potential, you assume they have the capacity to answer for themselves, and then see how you can make yourself useful. You might ask how you can help them think the issue through. Or, ask if they want a sounding board. What's important is that you assume people have the answers and that your role is to help them think.

Rock makes the point that we want the other person to do all the thinking. To do that we need to ask questions. In Step 4, Rock suggests we use what he calls "thinking questions." Rather than asking questions about the problem, you want to ask questions about their thinking. Some examples of thinking questions are:

- How long have you been thinking about this?
- How committed are you to resolving this?
- How motivated are you to resolve this?
- What insights are you having?
- Are you clear about what to do next?

If you want to help your people learn and grow, and to take more ownership of issues, we think you will find this book very useful.

3 Big Cs

Question: Our organization has identified three major objectives. We call them the 3 Big Cs: "Collaboration, Communication and Community." We know that excellence in these three areas is critical to our success, both internally and externally with our clients.

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Our desire as an organization is to continually improve and excel: in collaborative efforts; in clear, concise and effective communication; and in building an effective and healthy community. Do you have any suggestions that might help us?

Collaborations response: First, in a nutshell, we applaud your having taken the time to think about, identify and define for yourselves major contributors to your success. You might be surprised to learn that many organizations and groups where we work have not taken that step. You might also be surprised that at the few places we work where they have identified what is most important, they almost never talk about it after that.

Our initial suggestion might be to rearrange the order of the “3 Big Cs.” A more logical order, at least to us, would be Communication, Collaboration, Community. Our argument being that communication is foundational. Since successful collaboration is dependent on how well we communicate, better communication will lead to better results from collaborative efforts.

In turn, a major factor in the health and effectiveness of a community will be how well individuals and groups are able to communicate and collaborate. So we would suggest that the foundation is good communication, which enables better collaborative effort, which leads the ability to build a healthier community.

Next, because you have identified and defined those objectives you now have a context for “How are we doing?” discussions. You can discuss meetings, projects, etc., in terms of “How are we doing in our efforts to continually improve in the 3 Big Cs?”

We suggest that you constantly ask for, and give each other feedback in those areas. As examples:

“In this meeting, how well have we been communicating?” “Did people listen and understand what was said? Or, were people so busy thinking about their next response, or re-formulating their own arguments, that they weren’t really listening to what was being said?”

“How could we have been more effective in our effort to collaboratively resolve this problem?” “Who else might we have included in this session?” “Were we into competition on this project to the detriment of collaboration?” “What or who interfered with our efforts to effectively collaborate on this project? How are we going to more effectively work around that in the future?”

“Are we being successful in continually building a healthier community?” “What have we been neglecting?” “How would you describe your sense of our community at this moment?”

If the “3 Big Cs” are to be major drivers in how you interact, how you solve problems, how you work together, and what results from your work together and with clients, then you must continually talk about them. Ask for, give and receive feedback that will enable you to make appropriate course corrections.

First Communication...

Let’s focus on interpersonal communication for the moment. In the past we have twice touched directly on some aspects of effective communication: (Summer 1999 and Summer 2002. The issues with those articles are available on both Dave’s and Susan’s web sites.

In addition to that information, effective communication depends on effective listening. We would guess that everyone reading this article knows that “active listening” means making a conscious effort to hear not only the words but the entire message in what is being said, paying attention, acknowledging what you are hearing, checking to make sure you are understanding what you are hearing, paraphrasing, etc. We would even guess that most people reading this article have had some training in “active listening.” However, our observation from our work with individuals and groups is that it is very rare to find people who actually practice “active listening.”

Below are tips on active listening, if you are serious about continually improving and becoming increasingly effective communicators you will put into practice “active listening.”

Some tips to help with active listening from MindTools.com are:

1. Pay attention. Give the speaker your undivided attention and acknowledge the message. Recognize that what is not said also speaks loudly.
 - Look at the speaker.
 - Put aside distracting thoughts. Don’t mentally prepare a rebuttal!
 - Avoid being distracted by your cell phone, computer, other activities
 - Pay attention to the speaker’s body language.
 - Refrain from side conversations when in a group setting.
2. Show that you are listening. Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.
 - Nod occasionally.

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- Smile and use other facial expressions.
 - Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
 - Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like “yes,” and “uh huh.”
3. Provide feedback. Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. Your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.
- Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. “What I’m hearing is...” and “It sounds like you are saying...” are great ways to reflect back.
 - Ask questions to clarify certain points. “What do you mean when you say...?” “Is this what you mean?”
 - Summarize the speaker’s comments periodically.
 - If you find yourself responding emotionally to what someone said, say so, and ask for more information: “I may not understand you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally. What I thought you just said is ...; is that what you meant?”
4. Defer judgment. Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.
- Allow the speaker to finish.
 - Don’t interrupt with counter-arguments.
5. Respond Appropriately. Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.
- Be candid, open, and honest in your response.
 - Assert your opinions respectfully.
 - Treat the other person as he or she would want to be treated.

This may be simplistic, however good listening skills are fundamental to good communication. Studies all indicate that we all tend to think we are above average drivers, athletes, writers and listeners, when in fact we all have room for improvement.

When it comes to practicing active listening, as Nike says “Just do it!”

We will address thoughts on “Collaborations” and “Community” in the next couple of issues of *Collaborations*. We do applaud your efforts in identifying what’s most important to you as individuals and as an organization. We are confident those efforts will yield rewards for you.

The Role of a Leader

We’ve discussed leadership in a variety of ways in Collaborations over the past ten years. Here’s another story with a leadership lesson.

I, (Susan) was recently on vacation in Italy – on the Amalfi Coast. If you are unfamiliar with that part of Italy, it’s south of Rome and Naples. The coast is beautiful with a **very** narrow, winding road that takes you from town to town. To give you an idea of how narrow the road is, one tour book said that the white line down the middle is just a suggestion!

One day, we took a city bus to visit a city close to Positano, where we were staying. All was fine until our bus encountered a very large tour bus coming the opposite way around a very tight corner.

As both busses approached, it was obvious that we wouldn’t be able to pass each other at that point in the road. It also appeared that neither bus driver wanted to back up for the other to pass.



Very quickly, a person emerged from a hotel at the curve and started giving directions to both drivers. Our driver was asked to back up and both drivers had to adjust their wheel position. Finally, both drivers folded in their side-view mirrors and we were able to pass – with about an inch to spare.

So, what’s the leadership lesson? Leadership can be a role – it doesn’t have to be a position. In this case, someone outside of the situation with no authority over either driver had a far better view of both busses as well as the road. He was able to step in quite easily and sort out what had to be done.

Are there times when you, as a leader, are too close to a situation to be able to help sort it out? Would it help in those situations to have someone else provide a view of reality for you? Or, is providing a different view a role you can play for others in the organization? Think about it -- If you are in the bus – you may not be the one to best help the bus move forward in a safe and efficient manner!

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is in its third printing.



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