



Session 1.9 | Self-Awareness and Developing Others

For any leader to effectively develop other people, they must model and teach the 3 Essential Attributes that we've been considering - Knowledge, Connection, and Awareness. These attributes are what make a leader worth following in the new world.

In this session, we're going to look at how Awareness impacts your ability to develop other people.

Take a moment right now to download the Worksheet for this session so you can follow along.

I am a task-oriented person so it's easy for me to identify a project that needs to be done and to focus on getting it accomplished.

I've learned that there are many times that my driven nature frustrates and even intimidates other people. Early in my career I was often oblivious to what was going on.

Years ago, I sensed a rising level of frustration within our organization and team. So, I sat down with several members of our team and asked them to help me understand what was going on, and why the tension was rising.

While I expected some of the responses – others surprised me. Some of the responses hurt deeply, not because the team members were being unkind, but I simply had a hard time believing what I was hearing. They said things like...

Sometimes you're condescending and intimidating.

You occasionally micromanage tasks and projects.

The way you speak to us makes us feel incompetent – like you think we don't know anything. Those aren't easy words for anybody to hear. But if I continue this downward trend with our team, the result would be devastating – to the organization, to the team, and to me.

I spent a significant amount of time thinking about how to improve my relationship with my team members and their perception of my leadership. I spent a lot of time with them, asking them, and listening to them.

What I learned were 4 Things That Every Leader Should Know About Awareness...

1. Perception is Reality

While we may have heard that phrase before, many leaders need to fully consider what that phrase means.

The way your team members, clients, and customers perceive you is how you really are in their mind and from their perspective. It really doesn't matter if you agree or disagree with their perception of you.

Your team members' perception of you is reality.

If others perceive you as arrogant and difficult – you are. If they perceive you as weak or unwilling to stand up for your convictions or take up for them – you are.

There's never going to be a good reason to justify your behavior or even to clarify your perspective.

You may have valid reasons for moving forward quickly. They may not understand the pressure or the criticism that you're receiving from your boss. They may not know what you're dealing with at home.

The truth is – it doesn't matter to them. What they perceive is reality, and your awareness of this is critical. Your self-awareness is critical.

2. Growth is Difficult

It's not that we don't know this; or that this is something new or innovated. The question is, are we being intentional, are we intentionally considering our self-awareness?

When you're in growth mode, you need to prepare your team for what's coming.

Several years ago, I noticed that our organization was growing rapidly; our revenue was 4 times what it was 10 years prior. We were in the middle of a one million dollar building project and we immediately moved into the construction of a 4.5 million dollar project.

This kind of crazy growth means that there were a lot of moving parts – adding new personnel, launching new initiatives, changing leadership, developing new ways to communicate.

All of these moving parts created friction. Some people handle the growth and change well while others process things more slowly.

Good leaders pay attention to and are aware of the stress on the team and on the organization, and they make adjustments when necessary. Growth is difficult, and self-awareness or awareness of this is critical for the leader worth following.

3. Everything is an experiment

Since many parts are continuously shifting in growing organizations, successful leaders and teams adopt the perspective that everything is an experiment.

Some experiments work wonderfully. Others don't – yet they can be evaluated and adjusted to be implemented more effectively.

When everything is approached as an experiment, leaders and teams find new margin and a willingness to solve problems creatively. As a result, the leader is more aware of the current reality and better prepared to provide proper guidance.

Leaders and team members who can't appropriately navigate, these environmental and organizational changes won't make it! Momentum fades, morale plummets, and team members give up.

When it comes to awareness wise leaders adapt the perspective that everything is an experiment.

4. Listening is required

Your team members are partners who should know they have absolute freedom to contribute their unique perspective to the organization.

Do you care enough about your team to listen, and listen longer than you ever thought possible?

Listen to their perspective – their perception – which will always be different than yours. And if you're going to understand their perspective, you must listen.

We've said this before, Bill Greer, President of Milligan College, once said to me, "If you want to help people, listen for as long as you possibly can before responding."

Your team members are trading nearly 200 hours of their lives every month to be a part of what you are building together.

Are they trading their time for something worthwhile?

The only way you will ever know is if you stop long enough to listen intently and ask thoughtful questions. If you're not ready to listen, you're not ready to lead.

5. Vision must be Clear

A leader can't get to where they want to go if they haven't clearly defined where they are headed. Neither can the team.

A team without clarity around vision becomes frustrated and eventually overwhelmed. Vision allows people to determine if and how they fit into the culture and direction of the organization, and you must be communicating the vision often enough to provide ample opportunity for them to self-assess – their performance, their vision, their passion, their fit.

Your people want to be reminded why their work is so important and how their contribution is making a significant difference.

Vision is the foundation for all growth and is essential for the self-aware leader.

We've come to the end of Module 1, Lead.

In this Module, we were reminded that all leaders need help. Then we looked at what makes a leader worth following and the 3 essential attributes of The Leader Worth Following...

1. Knowledge (Competency, Expertise, Education, Experience) Relevant Competence
2. Connection (Relationship, Care, Support) WHO and WHAT matter most?
3. Awareness (Self-awareness).

Next Session

Now that we understand more about what makes a leader worth following, in the next session, we are going to move on to Module 2 – DISCOVER which is all about Finding the Right Tools for Developing People Around You. If you haven't already, take a moment right now to download the Worksheet on this page and complete the action steps for this session.

Remember, you don't need to get them perfect, you just need to take the next best step for you.

I'll see you in Module 2!