

The Trainer's Role in Building High Performing Leaders

By Adele B. Lynn

At the heart of all outstanding organizations is a culture that promotes productivity and quality by valuing and creating trusting relationships at all levels of the company. Of course, sound business practices are essential to success, but without trusting relationships that are forged each day at all levels, organizations are limited and distracted by events and symptoms that dampen morale and discourage the attainment of business goals.

Most often, how a leader reacts to situations will build trust, goodwill and co-operation with employees and peers or will further drive wedges into tenuous relationships. When a leader can master appropriate internal emotional reactions to situations and also master his external response, the leader is working with a high level of emotional intelligence and creating a high trust environment. This type of environment leads to high performance.

Training and development professionals can play an integral role in helping leaders to create high trust cultures that inspire performance. In order to do so, trainers must be able to add to their current skill building approach to leadership development. Most leadership development efforts have done a commendable job at focusing on skills and competencies. For example, many leaders have been trained in conflict resolution or in performance coaching where they have been given models or steps to follow. (See graphic model.) We also find that many of these leaders fare well in classroom or role-play activities aimed at building skill in these areas. However, back on the job in the heat of the moment, these same leaders may do or say things that destroy the trust and put performance at risk because they are unprepared to perform when emotions overrule their rational thought processes and therefore, their values. (See graphic model.) Therefore, our leadership development efforts must be more comprehensive and assist leaders not only with skill building, but also with methods to develop ways to improve their emotional intelligence so that their good intentions are not hijacked.

Here are some suggestions for training and development professionals to begin the process of transforming their leadership curriculum efforts:

Step 1 - Understand the Link Between Emotions and Trust - As training and development professionals, we must understand the link between emotions and high trust / high performance so that we can offer leaders the rational basis for development in this area. That will require reading and educating ourselves before we can educate others.

Step 2 - Role Model the Link Between Emotions and Trust

- Obviously, the more we practice and model behaviors that are consistent with our intentions or values and are not subject to emotional hijacking, the better prepared we will be to offer guidance to others in the classroom.

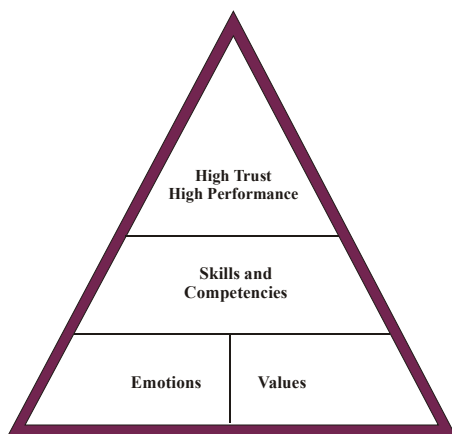
Step 3 - Integrate Existing Curricula - Look for opportunities to modify existing curriculum designs that will take the learning beyond the skill building component. Consider offering additional course work for leaders on this topic. Always link the curriculum back to the business need and business values.

Step 4 - Show /Provide Examples Where Emotional Reactions By Leaders Can Impact Trust and Performance - Our job as trainers is to bring real life examples to the classroom or to coaching. Provide your leaders with concrete examples in your workplace that will help them understand how performance can be impacted by emotions. Be sure to include examples where emotions override both skill and values.

Step 5 - Provide Self-Awareness Tools - Leadership development aimed at skill building alone will not provide the learning opportunity that developing the leader's self awareness can provide. Leadership curriculums should be heavy loaded with opportunities to build self-awareness and should be followed with actionable how-to's for leaders who care to improve.

Step 6 - Assess Performance on Trust Building Factors - Leaders whose performance is assessed on how well they build high trust cultures proven to affect high performance are more apt to take training initiatives in this area seriously.

Step 7 - Be an Influencer - Seek sponsors who are passionate about promoting a high trust / high performing culture. Use sponsors to link performance assessments into existing performance systems, hiring systems, and training curriculum. Provide your sponsors with performance data and ROI that will link this to your company's bottom line.



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