

LEADERS NEED LOVE... AND COACHING, TOO

- ▲ Leaders have a disproportionate impact on Organizational Culture
- ▲ Good leaders always want to know where they stand, what they can improve
- ▲ Diagnostics help leaders understand their impact on the current Culture



*"To help others develop, start with yourself! When the boss acts like a little god and tells everyone else they need to improve, that behavior can be copied at every level of management. **Every level then points out how the level below it needs to change. The end result: No one gets much better.**"*

- Marshall Goldsmith

*"The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born -- that there is a genetic factor to leadership. This myth asserts that people simply either have certain charismatic qualities or not. **That's nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born.**"*

- Warren G. Bennis

*"Winning companies win because they have good leaders who **nurture the development of other leaders at all levels of the organization.**"*

- Noel Tichy

*"The more seriously you take your growth, **the more seriously your people will take you.**"*

- John Maxwell

My first leadership opportunity occurred when I was a supervisor in the ski school at the resort where I worked. My job was to match up instructors with people who wanted private lessons. I used my knowledge of their skiing styles and those customers I had seen them work with to develop a matchmaking system.

When we launched the new process, the customers who purchased lessons were very happy. Private lesson sales surged. **I continued to load them up on a steady diet of their “longest and strongest” customer types. The instructors’ hours went up.** Everyone should have been happy.

But the instructors weren’t. Even though they were getting more work, and they only got paid when they worked, they began to grumble. **As some of the resort’s premier ambassadors, we couldn’t afford to have them unhappy. As a leader, I needed some coaching.**

Some years later, I was puzzled. At my new company’s marketing department, I had an open-door policy, as most leaders do. Nevertheless, I didn’t have a lot of takers. The answer came in a follow-up to a leadership diagnostic I had taken. When I got my results, I gathered those team members that had provided input on the survey to ask for their help. When I asked for input on my improvement areas, people spent a lot of time “staring at their shoes” instead of offering suggestions. After a very pregnant pause, someone who only had a “dotted line” reporting relationship finally spoke up. **That no one would share their concerns meant that, as a leader, I needed some coaching.**



More recently, I was working with a CEO of a very high-performing company who was struggling to get innovative contributions in meetings. **He didn’t realize that his “thinking out loud” and offering suggestions to foment discussion were being taken by others as what he wanted done, thus shutting out any further input.** He was, in fact, creating his own problem. As a leader, he needed some coaching.

Leaders at every level need appreciation for what they are doing well, and they need unvarnished feedback for what they can do better. The former is often held back for fear of being viewed as trying to flatter the boss. The latter is often suppressed because, well, it’s the boss and the feedback may not be appreciated, and adverse consequences could result. Yet both are very important to help the leader develop into a better one.

Good diagnostics help. As confidential instruments, they provide an accurate picture of how the leader believes s/he is leading as well as the leader’s impact. The first is delivered through a self-report and the second through a report by others. These diagnostics are especially useful when they are integrated with the current and ideal reports on the overall culture. Not only can one see the impact on the behaviors of direct reports, the comparison to the culture fosters discovery of and understanding for the leader’s accountability in the existence of the current culture throughout the organization. And in closing the loop through these comparisons, one can understand better some of the stressors the leader generates by the mindset under which everyone, the leader included, acts and reacts.

The diagnostic, while important, is only a tool; an effective use of that tool by a capable coach can help the leader to alter behavior and deliver better results for the team members and the organization.

While the coach is good and the diagnostic helpful, the leader, and the team members must be ready to alter their behavior. That requires some understanding of how the change process works. We’ll discuss that next.