

LEADERSHIP BRIEFINGS

Taking your leadership skills to the next level

Special Edition – April 2019

Leadership Tips

Complexity is your enemy,

according to famed entrepreneur Richard Branson, as quoted on Twitter by investment firm Motley Fool: “Any fool can make something complicated. It is hard to keep things simple.” Remember that no matter what the intelligence level of your audience is, the issue isn’t that they can’t understand complexity—it’s that when you add too much to the cognitive load they’re already dealing with, you’ll run smack into a mental resistance you may never actually detect.

Make any decision-making group more effective by limiting membership to seven.

Once you have more than seven in the group, each additional member reduces decision effectiveness by 10%, say the authors of *Decide & Deliver: 5 Steps to Breakthrough Performance in Your Organization*.

Let a tough problem marinate overnight.

Write it down before you go to bed. Let your mind turn it over, and then write more in the morning. Who used this method? Thomas Edison. He once said: “Never go to sleep without a request to your subconscious.”

— Adapted from “10 Things the Most Successful People Do Every Day,” Eric Barker, *Time*.

First things first. Maggie Fox, founder and CEO of Social Media Group, jots down three goals—and only three—every morning. “If you have more than three priorities,” she says, “you have no priorities.”

Personal Development

7 musts for effective leaders

Legendary business journalist Marshall Loeb spent decades interviewing the greatest leaders of American business. Along the way, he defined these steps to effective leadership:

1. Know the difference between leading and managing. Loeb liked to quote Warren Bennis on this: “Leaders are people who do the right things; managers are people who do things right. There’s a profound difference.”

2. Develop your sense of purpose. “What employees want most from their

company leaders,” Loeb wrote, “is direction and meaning, trust and hope.”

3. Show courage. Sometimes, that means the courage to be extremely unpopular.

4. Use candor. When you say what you really think, you encourage the people you lead to do the same.

5. Limit yourself to just a few key objectives. Loeb quotes Jack Welch on this: “I have only three things to do: I have to choose the right people, allocate the right number of

Continued on page 7



Power Presentations

You have 30 seconds to impress me

The lights dim, some very important people cross their arms and you walk to the front of the room. When addressing senior executives, every minute counts. In his book *Speaking Up*, Frederick Gilbert offers these structural frameworks when organizing your material:

1. What/why/action steps. Summarize what you want to convey in the first 30 seconds. Pinpoint what you expect your listeners to say or do as a result of your talk—and the core message you want to plant in their heads.

Then explain why your central point matters to the audience. Emphasize why they should care, why the stakes are high and why timing is crucial.



Conclude with action steps. Seek commitment for your proposal and make it easy for others to say yes.

2. Good/better/best. Give listeners a three-prong choice. Start with a good option, offer a better alternative and end with what you deem the best one.

Continued on page 2

Apple CEO Tim Cook on enduring your burdens



Tim Cook

When Tim Cook became Apple's CEO in August 2011, he assumed that Steve Jobs would remain chairman for a long time. Battling pancreatic cancer, Jobs' prognosis was uncertain.

But within six weeks, Jobs died. On hearing the news, Cook calls it "the worst day ever."

More than seven years later, Cook has come into his own as CEO of one of the world's most visible and valuable companies.

In addition to tackling the traditional role of a CEO (maintaining profitable margins, navigating global growth, etc.), Cook has embraced broader social issues.

Cook, the first CEO of a Fortune 500 company to come out as gay, views "evangelizing moving human rights forward" as part of his job.

Publicly identifying himself as gay was not an impulsive move. He planned it for about a year. He pondered what

to say, how to say it and what media vehicle to use to convey his message. "I wanted it to be in a business [publication]," he says. "That's what I know, that's who I am."

He sought advice from Anderson Cooper, because he admired the TV personality's handling of his own personal story. It fits with Cook's penchant for seeking out outsiders (such as billionaire Warren Buffett) for input.

"That doesn't mean I always do what they say," he says. "But I think it's incumbent on a CEO to not just listen to points of view but to actually solicit them."

Like many leaders, Cook realizes that hiring the right person is more art than science. He admits that one of his biggest mistakes as CEO was selecting John Browett to run Apple's retail stores. Browett only lasted six months before leaving Apple.

Though he has favorite phrases—

many things are "deep," and Apple's mission is always its "North Star"—he eschews the jargon many CEOs use. And while he's quick to trumpet Apple, he is also unassuming, quickly noting, after saying his job can be "lonely," that "CEOs don't need any sympathy."

He also believes that "the traditional CEO believes his or her job is the profit and loss, is the revenue statement, the income and expense, the balance sheet. Those are important, but I don't think they're all that's important. There's an incredible responsibility to the employees of the company, to the communities and the countries that the company operates in, to people who assemble its products, to developers, to the whole ecosystem of the company." ■

— Adapted from "Tim Cook, the interview: Running Apple 'is sort of a lonely job,'" Jena McGregor, washingtonpost.com.

"...it's incumbent on a CEO to not just listen to points of view but to actually solicit them."

30 seconds

Continued from page 1

Highlight the pros and cons of each choice, perhaps using bulleted lists as a visual aid.

3. Start with the end. State your conclusion in your first sentence. This captures an audience's attention and showcases your confidence. Then cite evidence that supports your conclusion. Avoid the trap of opening with a history lesson (i.e., how we got here). Busy executives might cut you off. ■

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Embracing Humility

'Seinfeld' taught us to just let it go

There's a great lesson about the usefulness of self-deprecation in an old episode of "Seinfeld," the show that seemingly covered every awkward situation and human foible.

In the episode, Jerry accidentally offends an acquaintance of his, Sally Weaver. Sally proceeds to launch a one-woman show called "Jerry Seinfeld is the Devil," in which she tirelessly lambastes him on stage. When Jerry catches wind of the show, he pleads meekly for her to stop it and eventually resorts to a hapless cease-and-desist letter. His bumbling attempts to kill the performances are immediately reported on stage by Sally, to the delight of audiences who love her skewering of the comedian.

Guest star Kathy Griffin once performed a comedy routine accusing Seinfeld of being rude to her during the filming of an earlier episode of the series. Instead of becoming defensive about the incident, Seinfeld expressed his amusement with it—and this became the genesis of the plotline involving Sally Weaver's one-woman show.

While in the episode Jerry scrambles to protect his image, the real Seinfeld chose to accept public criticism and even acknowledge it with self-deprecation. The more good-naturedly you take punishment, the more you take the power away from those who have come after you, leaving them with nowhere to go next ... and now *you* own the conversation. ■

The tough decision checklist

Stop second-guessing yourself and get out a pen. After you go coolly through this checklist point by point, you'll be ready to stand up and make that difficult call—no hesitation, and no regrets.

- ✓ I've done all the research and leg-work I possibly can about this issue. I know the math, the history and the precedents.
- ✓ I've done everything I can to remove the risk factor, taking steps to stabilize the circumstances that I can control.
- ✓ I've examined the worst-case scenario if I go ahead with the decision.
- ✓ I fully understand the point of view of those who are likely to disagree most strongly with my decision.
- ✓ I've visualized opening the newspaper tomorrow and seeing my decision splashed across the front page, and I know what the headline would likely be.
- ✓ I've thought about what a much younger, more idealistic version of me might have done in this case, and I've explained my reasoning to that imaginary person.
- ✓ I've taken the time to look at the issue through both very optimistic lenses and very pessimistic ones.
- ✓ I've talked to the one person I trust most in the world to get their view on what I should do.
- ✓ I've talked to someone utterly impartial, with no knowledge of the situation, to get their gut feel for what I should do.
- ✓ I've identified and discarded all the information that might sway me emotionally.
- ✓ I've determined that no matter what the outcome, there is a way to fix it if things go haywire.
- ✓ I'm prepared to be turned against, and I will neither overreact to inevitable arguments nor let valuable relationships suffer.
- ✓ I've reminded myself that even if I make the wrong decision, carrying it out will change the circumstances to the point where unexpected opportunities and situations will arise—giving me yet another chance to act and be a strong leader. ■

Speaking Strongly

Put some spine in your speech

Inject power into your remarks by eliminating words or phrases that weaken your message. You already know not to apologize needlessly.

Here are some less obvious but equally important keys to communicate with clarity and force:

1. Skip the minimizing. Beware of beginning a conversation by saying, "I only want to talk about..." This leads listeners to think that your comments are trivial, when in fact you want to make a critical point. Instead, say, "I'd like to discuss..."

2. Avoid the waffling "might." When you respond to a request by saying,

"I might be able to do that," you create more problems than you solve. It's better to make a promise forthrightly.

3. Project confidence, not doubt. By telling an employee, "If you can get to that today, we can rest easy," you're dropping a not-so-subtle hint that you want it done. A clearer alternative: "When you complete that today, we can rest easy."

"If" introduces the possibility something may not occur. Using "when" conveys your faith that others will follow through—and signals that the task really matters to you. ■

— Adapted from *The Secret Language of Influence*, Dan Seidman, AMACOM.

The signs of an ethical apocalypse

Watch out for these three ways your moral judgment can be hijacked:

1. You lie to yourself. "I think it's OK to do this," you might say. That's because you want to see something sketchy as better than it really is.

2. You rationalize. "I know it's wrong," you admit, "but I have a good reason." That reason may be that you're under pressure to meet a short-term goal, which can make lousy decisions look fine. For instance, you might rationalize that your family's financial security is your top goal, and you'll do whatever it takes to keep the money coming, even if it means acting unethically.

3. You disengage. "It's not my problem," you say. Discouraged leaders leave critical issues unresolved because they no longer care. If success and failure feel the same, disengaged leaders check out. They can take down an organization pretty quickly.

Bottom line: In such a toxic environment, you have two choices: Tackle problems head-on or get out so that someone else can. ■

— Adapted from *The 3 Power Values*, David Gebler, Jossey-Bass.

Rise above the negativity: 3 steps

New brain science shows that constant exposure to complaining will reinforce negative thinking and behavior.

It's hard to stay positive in such a toxic environment, but you know you've got to do it for your sanity and effectiveness.

Three steps will get you there:

Step 1: Reclaim the way you interpret and react to situations.

Step 2: Create insights that separate successful people from the rest. You can position yourself to recognize and respond to good ideas.

Step 3: Proceed in ways that will turn your ideas into actions. ■

— Adapted from *Three Simple Steps*, Trevor Blake, BenBella Books.

A famous QB, almost a footnote

Most sports fans picture Tom Brady throwing endless touchdowns and winning championship ring after championship ring.

But consider the end of the game that propelled him to his first Super Bowl as a backup filling in for the Patriots' regular starter, Drew Bledsoe, back in 2002. When Brady was sacked at a critical moment and seemed to cough up the football, probably securing a victory for the Oakland Raiders, the refs ruled instead that the play was dead.

Let's say the call went the other way instead. The Patriots' season would have ended, likely with much talk about how Brady still had a lot to learn about winning. His season as a fill-in had been solid but not spectacular ... so maybe the Patriots would have decided that when Bledsoe got healthy, he should be the starter again. Perhaps Brady would have held a clipboard for another two years, or been traded away into a different system. He might have languished.

And then there's Jerome Bettis. In 2005 the fullback was enjoying his last hurrah as a Pittsburgh Steeler after a fabulous career. Everyone loved "The Bus" for the way he pounded defensive lines and always seemed to smile afterward.

The Indianapolis Colts stood in the Steelers' way of a Super Bowl, but didn't seem to have any hope of winning as the clock ticked down in the AFC Championship game. Suddenly, though, Bettis coughed up the football. If not for a game-saving tackle by quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, Bettis's celebration year may have gone up in smoke, and his entire legacy may have been different.

Makes you think how close many all-time greats came to facing an alternate reality where things weren't so rosy, doesn't it? Or perhaps their qualities as leaders would not have kept them down for very long—and somehow, they would have picked themselves up off the field and led another charge. ■

Mistake Recovery

How to dissect errors without conflict

For years, Sheryl Sandberg handled employees' mistakes by following standard procedure: Identify the key participants, meet with them and assess to what extent they take responsibility for their error.

Sandberg is a prominent businesswoman and the author of the groundbreaking leadership book *Lean In*. A few years ago, members of her team underwent basic training at the U.S. Marine Corps Base Quantico.

There, after a series of tough physical drills (with officers yelling at her and her colleagues), Sandberg was struck by what happened next: The Marines calmly discussed the exercises, dissected flaws in everyone's performance and highlighted learning points.

Initially, Sandberg chafed at this process. Her longtime belief was that "sitting down

together to discuss in excruciating detail how and why the mistake was made just seemed like piling on."

But she liked that their goal wasn't to make people feel worse about their screw-ups, but to pinpoint lessons learned in a blame-free environment. She also noted that the Marines record such takeaways so that everyone can review them.

"The Marines taught me the importance of creating a culture where failure is seen as a learning opportunity," she says. "When done insensitively, debriefs feel like public flagellation, but when expected and required, they no longer feel personal." ■

— Adapted from *Option B*, Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant, Alfred A. Knopf.



Sheryl Sandberg

Strategic Management

4 questions you need to ask your team

Intelligent leaders don't know everything. But they're smart enough to ask.

Posing sharp inquiries elevates your team's thinking. A lively back-and-forth exchange of ideas turns everyone into vested participants in the organization's success.

Here are four simple questions that effective leaders ask:

1. What's the point of this activity?

By asking, "Do we really know why we do this?," you enable employees to step back and see the larger purpose. Or not. In some cases, your question can expose time-wasting activities or exercises that your team can jettison. Just make sure to dig for specifics.

2. What's the third way? All too often, executives get ensnared in either-or thinking. They identify two options and pick one. But their narrow analysis prevents them from considering less obvious alternatives.



Ask about a third way—an option that widens the debate from two choices to three. Rather than weigh whether to mass-produce or customize your product, for example, explore mass customization to capture the advantages of both.

3. What happens if our assumptions are wrong?

Just as banks undergo "stress tests" to determine their resilience under worst-case scenarios, you can challenge your staff to examine whether their proposals can withstand pressures or negative developments.

They may present their ideas as workable if certain conditions occur. But the real test is what unfolds under unusually adverse conditions.

4. How much is enough? Know when to call it quits and resolve the matter. Otherwise, you can talk an issue to death and wind up without an action plan. ■

— Adapted from *Rules of Thumb*, Alan M. Webber, Collins Business.

Know where to draw your red lines



There's a quotation that has haunted me for many, many years. It was spoken by a guy named Steve. I didn't even really know the guy, but it turned out our dates for the senior prom were best friends, so I had to go with Steve to pick up our tuxedos.

I got in the car and he said to me, "Put on your seat belt." I said, "Why?" (This was many years ago before seat belts were in vogue.) Steve said to me, "Look, nobody rides in my car unless they're wearing a seat belt."

And I've always been struck by that sentence, and the assertiveness with which this young kid said it. In other words, he knew what his red lines were, and he was willing to enforce them. What it really showed me was that he was mature, someone with the potential to become a leader. It turns out he was planning to go to the Citadel in South Carolina to become an Army officer.

That kid had *gravitas*.

Gravitas can present itself in little ways. The *executive pause* is a handy device. Before you respond to someone—especially someone who's being negative—give it a couple of seconds. It lends an air of gravitas to your speaking, rather than interrupting people and finishing their sentences for them.

There's also the *executive posture*: If you sit up straight it lends some resonance to your voice because you start breathing from the diaphragm. It lowers your voice ever so slightly, and it gives you a little more oomph.

There are now people who do research on power poses—leaning forward when you're speaking to others, for example. Also, when you're standing you tend to become more assertive.

Power poses tend to increase testosterone levels and lower cortisol levels, and cortisol of course is what causes stress.

But of course, gravitas is mostly about firmness, decisiveness. Thinking of Steve, and how necessary it is to project gravitas, I recall how I learned a lesson in no meaning *no*.

I was doing some presentation skills training. In the morning we covered skills such as: Get your hands out of

your pocket, quit playing with the loose change in there, stop scratching your neck, that sort of thing. In the afternoon, the

attendees had to use these skills by actually getting up to make a presentation.

One guy got up when it was his turn and said, "Hi, my name is Bob and I'm going to teach you how to train your new puppy." And then he said, "Let your *cat* train your new puppy. Thank you, you've been a great audience." He sat right down then! I said, "You can't do that, man, you need to flesh that out just a little bit, you've got to give us more than two seconds." To which he replied, "Well, if you've ever watched a cat around a new puppy, you learn something: No meant no yesterday, it means no today and it's going to mean no tomorrow."

In other words, there are red lines, just like Steve with his seat belt policy.

You make sure everybody understands yours. You don't cross the line with a cat because they will make sure that you understand you're never going to do that again ... and *you* need to be the same way. ■

Fred Kniggendorf, Ph.D., is a training and adult education consultant and president of Gravyloaf, L.L.C.

Do you know where to draw your red lines ... and do you know how to enforce them?

How to ace a video interview

Here's some advice on prepping for a video interview from Tom Johnson, head of corporate communications for a consulting firm:

- 1. Plan what you *won't* say.** Besides mapping out your talking points, decide ahead of time what is off limits and plan your pivot back to your message.
- 2. Be concise.** Most TV interviews last only two or three minutes (and the average person's attention span is much shorter), so you can't give any sort of speech.
- 3. Smile.** People get nervous in these situations, but a simple smile can relax you and your host, improve your posture and lower stress. ■

— Adapted from "Ready for Your Close-up?", Tom Johnson, *Inc.*

Crazy idea? Try it

Allison Evanow was sleeping one summer night when it hit her. She woke up next morning, turned to her husband and said, "I have this crazy idea."

Already working in the spirits industry, Evanow had noticed a "sophisticated and energized cocktail movement." Bartenders were using fresh, organic ingredients and taking a "chef-like approach" to making cocktails. All this, but they were still using "industrial-brand spirits."

Evanow drew up a business plan that fall. Now her company, Square One Organic Spirits, works with a farming co-op in Montana that grows rye organically. The fermenting and distilling processes have to meet organic standards.

Because the spirits industry is highly regulated, Evanow's biggest hurdle was distribution. Her best tactic was to introduce the brand in person at cocktail bars. Within six months, she had opened 100 restaurant accounts and gotten Square One named on menus, "all based on the fact that it was organic." ■

— Adapted from "How I built a \$1 million business," interview with Jane Bennett Clark, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*.

How to reverse a failure

When something fails, follow these steps:

1. Look in the mirror. Examine what you did. Ask trusted advisors and colleagues to evaluate you. Ask yourself what you should do differently. You may figure out how to improve your own performance, and when other teammates see you looking in the mirror, they may do the same.

2. Go right back to work. Jumping back in to planning and preparation creates a framework for moving forward.

3. Communicate directly. Ignored, problems won't go away. Consult team members to find out what's going on.

4. Seek other leaders on the team. Appealing to people's sense of pride and ownership is a first step in putting things right. Talk to them about how you need their help to correct course.

5. Make necessary changes. Small or large, adjustments will have to be made. Take the steps, make the changes, learn the lessons and do better next time. ■

— Adapted from *Sharing the Sandbox*, Dean Brenner, The Latimer Group.

Personal Productivity

Self-audit: Analyze your time

To squeeze more productivity out of your workday, identify and plug holes that waste precious time. That requires awareness.

Divide a worksheet into four quadrants, and use it to categorize your activities from the past week. Create four headings for each quadrant as follows:

1. What I did to advance toward key goals. *Examples:* devising strategy, leading brainstorming meetings, researching a vital legal issue.

2. What I did that only I can do to add great value. *Examples:* writing code, wooing a star job candidate to join your organization, conferring with investors.

3. What I did that others can do—that doesn't add great value. *Examples:* shopping for a gift for a client, designing slides for a presentation.

4. What I did that added no value.

Examples: attending a four-hour unnecessary meeting, reorganizing old files.

Alternatively, you can apply the same four categories to the week ahead—assigning every activity to one of the four groups.

After sorting each of your tasks in the appropriate quadrant, assess the results. Ideally, most of your work focuses on the top two categories so that you're progressing toward important milestones and adding value.

Above all, eliminate any tasks in the fourth category. If you find you're allocating even a few hours a week to activities that do not add value, reset your priorities to avoid unproductive tasks. ■

— Adapted from *Short Cut Your Start Up*, Courtney and Carter Reum, Gallery Books.

Getting Great People

6 leaders' top hiring questions

Issie Lapowsky of *Inc.* reports on what's going on inside some top minds when they sit across from someone in an interview. Here are the questions they want answers to:

1. Tony Hsieh, Zappos: What's the biggest misperception people have of you?

Why? To gauge self-awareness.

2. Arianna Huffington, The Huffington Post: How do you unplug?

Why? People say they'll work to the bone. That's not good for them or the company.

3. Evan Williams, Twitter: What's most important to you in your work?

Why? It goes beyond skills and experience.

4. Bobbi Brown, Bobbi Brown Cosmetics: Why wouldn't I hire you?

Why? You get honest answers because it's unexpected.

5. Aaron Levie, Box: Describe how

you could have done a recent project 10 times better.

Why? You want people who think bigger.

6. Jason Goldberg, Fab: What have your parents taught you?

Why? It gets to people's core.

Managing People at Work editor Cal Butera offers this novel tip: Give an applicant an index card and ask him or her to write down one word to describe a condition that would cause them to quit the job in disappointment. Tell the applicant you won't look at it now, but you're going to keep the card and bring it out again in the event they get the job and then reach a one-year anniversary with your company, to see if that condition exists. It's tough for them not to be truthful when they know that card will be revisited someday. ■

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Editor Robert Lentz
LBeditor@BusinessManagementDaily.com

Editorial Director Patrick DiDomenico,
(703) 905-4583

Associate Publisher Adam Goldstein

Publisher Phillip Ash

Customer Service (800) 543-2055,
customer@BusinessManagementDaily.com

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In negotiation, make 'em laugh!



Q: Last week I sat in on a negotiation among some of our company's partners. Just when it seemed that they had reached a stalemate, my boss cracked a joke that instantly lightened the mood. Almost magically, she was able to rejuvenate the conversation—and reemphasize her position. But I can also recall times when jokes have flopped in meetings. This experience left me wondering: When and how should I use humor during negotiations (if at all)?

A: Several benefits come with using humor successfully. For example, research led by Nale Lehmann-Willenbrock at Universiteit van Amsterdam shows that using humor induces positive emotion, which in turn triggers positive communication and better team performance. Furthermore, humor has been shown to boost creativity. When co-workers with high levels of trust among one another used sarcasm (a specific type of humor in which you say the opposite of what you mean) in their conversations, they performed better than others on tasks that required creative insight, Li Huang of INSEAD found in her research.

In research conducted with Brad Bitterly and Maurice Schweitzer of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, I found that telling a joke that elicits laughter and is viewed as funny and appropriate projects confidence and competence (by conveying an accurate read of social dynamics), and also increases our status.

Although the benefits of well-timed quips may sound appealing, a joke can fail in many ways. Jokes can be perceived as unfunny or inappropriate (or both). Because an inappropriate joke can be damaging, you should keep lewd, derogatory or other deprecating jokes to yourself.

Negotiations are often fraught with tense moments and negative emotions. In fact, I recommend a strategy, first proposed by the late Harvard professor Howard Raiffa, called a post-settlement settlement—continuing to negotiate after a deal has been reached—because some of the best outcomes can be uncovered after

the tension of the negotiation has been cut by reaching a deal. Using humor has the same effect: A well-timed, sincere, successful joke can help break the tension, increase social closeness, build rapport and foster an enjoyable, positive tone during your negotiation.

You might also use humor as a way to answer difficult questions. One of the most challenging aspects of negotiating is being asked questions that you don't want to or shouldn't answer—because by answering directly or transparently, you would put yourself in a weak or compromised bargaining position. In those scenarios, you may be able to use humor to divert or distract—even for a moment—so you can think more carefully about what information you can and should disclose.

Finally, humor makes our interactions more memorable. The best negotiators make their counterpart feel great about the outcome, even if it isn't in the counterpart's favor. Finding the humor in your negotiation will increase your counterpart's subjective sense of satisfaction and help you both remember the interaction in a favorable light.

I will end with one word of warning: Know thyself. Humor comes easily to some people. But if you are not a natural jokester or witty conversationalist, you can also score interpersonal-warmth points by laughing authentically at others' jokes. Very few people enjoy interacting with someone who is overly serious or never laughs. Don't be afraid to make your negotiation light and fun. When you do, you and your counterpart will enjoy it more, be more likely to uncover creative, cooperative deals and remember the interaction more fondly. ■

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Alison Wood Brooks is an assistant professor and Hellman faculty fellow at Harvard Business School.

Are you mindful enough?

If you're a keen observer with sharp sensory perceptions, then you're what Harvard psychology professor Ellen Langer calls "a mindful leader."

Mindful leaders possess curiosity, openness to new ideas and an awareness of their surroundings. They resist rigid thinking and bureaucratic rules. They have emotional intelligence.

To increase your mindfulness, watch how others interact. Try to connect cause and effect to see how an action leads to a reaction. If you hear someone in a group giggle, for instance, note whether the laughter builds.

Mindful leaders are rapt listeners who seek understanding, not agreement. They delight in learning a new fact or gaining an insight.

Thanks to their listening skills, mindful leaders are especially attuned to signs of change. They spot trends quickly, processing clues that others ignore. They're also more emotionally intelligent, noticing colleagues' moods.

Entrepreneurs and chief executives alike can demonstrate mindfulness. Take A.G. Lafley, former CEO of Procter & Gamble. He enjoyed visiting with customers in their homes and supermarkets, seeking out their opinions without imposing his own. ■

— Adapted from "13 Ways of Looking at a Leader," Leigh Buchanan, *Inc.*

7 musts

Continued from page 1

dollars and transmit ideas from one division to another with the speed of light."

6. Borrow the best ideas and methods from others. GE was among the first to study and apply Wal-Mart's retailing systems.

7. Remember that great leaders are made, not born. "They're made," Loeb observed, "usually, self-made." ■

— Adapted from a speech that Marshall Loeb delivered before the Minnesota Center for Corporate Responsibility.

How Airbnb's legal mind keeps going

For years now, Belinda Johnson has been in charge of Airbnb's legal efforts, a tough job because the alternative hotel company is on the cutting edge of regulatory compliance.



Now her job has become even bigger, with last year's promotion to chief business affairs and legal officer. Her new role includes strategy, public policy, communications and philanthropy. How she deals:

Organizing principle: "Rigorous prioritization."

Work habits: "I have to force myself to take breaks."

Key tool: Apple Notes.

Sleep: Seven hours. In bed by 10.

Work on vacation: Check in once in the morning, in the afternoon and at night. "That helps me relax."

Coping tactic: "I never really feel overwhelmed. I feel energized." ■

— Adapted from "Secrets of the Most Productive People," *Fast Company*.

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Communication Strategy

Keep one step ahead in arguments

When arguments arise, it's tempting to make statements to assert your claims or defend yourself. But shrewd questions work better to calm the situation.

Use these inquiries to extricate yourself from confrontational conversations:

• **If a colleague criticizes you**, ask, "Can you give an example?" When critics shift from leveling general attacks to citing specific instances, you're in a better position to evaluate the validity of their comments.

Follow up by asking, "Can you suggest any actions I can take to address your concern?" This shows you're eager to hear more and learn from others. Your receptivity, in itself, can defuse a hostile adversary.

• **If your beliefs come under attack**, resist the urge to defend or disagree. Instead, shove aside indignant feelings and play the role of an inquisitive college professor.

Say a disgruntled employee tells you, "You and your core values! You're such a hypocrite." Control your anger and ask, "How do you think our core values need to change?" As you brace for

stinging feedback, strive to understand the full nature of the employee's grievance before you respond.

• **If a customer adopts an apathetic tone**, your instinctive reaction might be to talk more. But before you shift into verbal overdrive, probe to determine the customer's mindset.

Ask, "What's the most pressing issue you face?" Steer the dialogue in a direction that will best serve the customer's interest.

• **If someone erupts in anger**, take a breath and remind yourself not to match or exceed the other's fury. Then pause and ask, "Do you mind if we start over?"

Highly emotional people might continue to express their anger. But keep asking succinct questions such as, "What can I do to help?" or "Can we start from scratch?" Responding to difficult conversations with earnest questions often helps you maintain your composure. Better yet, it signals to others that you're eager to listen rather than ratchet up the tension. ■

— Adapted from *Power Questions*, Andrew Sobel and Jerold Panas, John Wiley & Sons.

Personal Branding

3 reasons to still carry business cards

If you think you no longer need a business card in today's high-tech, "there's an app for that" world, think again. Here are three points you may be overlooking:

1. People will remember you.

Making direct eye contact, smiling and handing over your business card creates a tangible connection people remember. Plus, a well-designed card allows you to show a bit of your personality and set yourself apart from others.

2. **People still expect them.** If you don't have one, you can look unprofessional, especially if someone hands

you a card and you can't reciprocate. The exchange of contact info should take all of one second; making it difficult really hurts you.

3. It's a way to close your first deal with someone.

Imagine the business card exchange as a sales pitch: When you have a customer in front of you, they're receptive. But when they leave your vision, they can very easily decide you're not worth the trouble. You can't guarantee everyone you meet will be on LinkedIn or willing to exchange information digitally later, but everyone will take a business card in the moment. ■