

Personal Excellence

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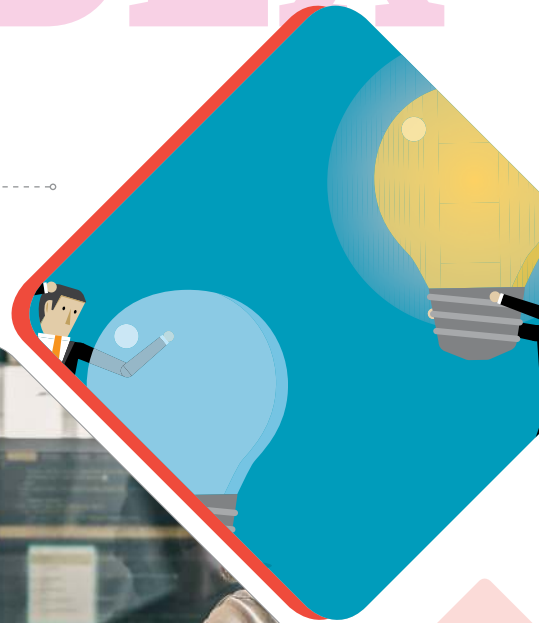
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September Is National Self-Care Awareness Month

We have been blaming the pandemic for changing the way we lived and worked. Definitely, certain disruptions have occurred but the pandemic-led-situations have also made each one of us realize the value of many things in life including, resilience, prioritizing self-care and gratitude. As September being the National Self-Care Awareness Month, let us look back at the life lessons the pandemic has taught us and decide what we should carry forward with us and what we should leave behind.

In this issue of **Personal Excellence**, we have included a few articles that will help you slow down, focus on yourself and move closer toward your goals, despite challenges.

Whether you've thrived or struggled during the pandemic, there's no doubt challenges came your way. The good news is that regardless of how things have gone up until now, you can reposition your focus to make a big splash and finish off the year strong. Angela Civitella in her article, **7 Ways To Finish The Year Strong**, reassures that no matter what has happened up to this point, the next few months can be your best ever.

When people are doing what you want them to do and your plans are working out the way you hoped, life is easy. But, how do you react when people aren't doing what you want them to do and your plans aren't unfolding the way

you had hoped? That's the true test. Read Liz Uram's article, **Don't Be The "Hot Mess" Boss** that talks about five communication habits of emotionally intelligent leaders.

The feeling of 'doom and gloom' and a lot of anxiety is what a lot of us are experiencing today. How can you, as an individual, change this and influence the negative place into a positive place? Lizette Volkwyn's article, **Tips To Influence The (Negative) Workplace Into A Positive One**, answers this and more.

Many people feel a dramatic sense of loneliness that can lead to depression, increased stress and a lack of purpose or mission in life. Why is this? Do you want to continue the rest of your life in this current state or do you want to change something? Check out Tim Connor's article, **The Source Of Loneliness** that sheds light on creating an action list of things.

In brief, the articles in this edition will definitely help you on your path toward personal and professional development and will surely go a long way towards improving your life skills. We hope you enjoy reading all the articles and get back to us with your valuable feedback.

Cheers!

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7 Ways To Finish The Year Strong

Slow down, focus on yourself and move closer toward your goals

By **Angela Civitella**

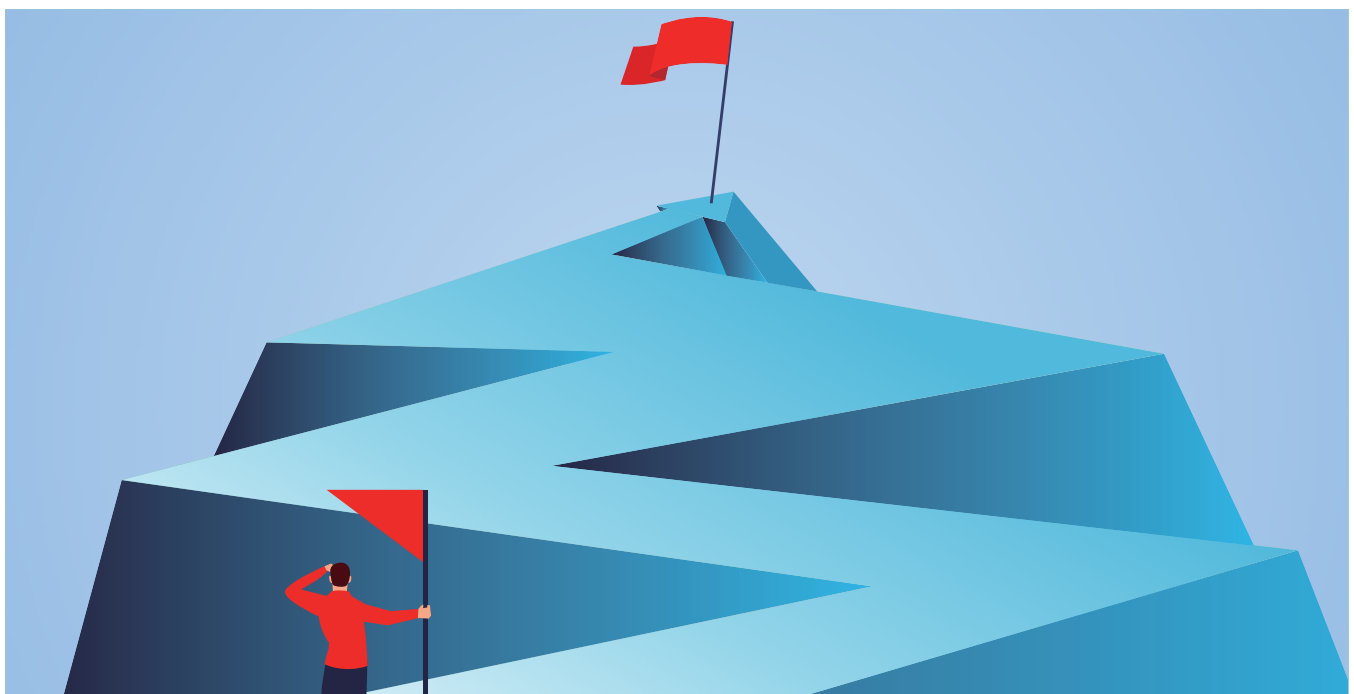
It's been a challenging year for many businesses due to the pandemic. Whether you've thrived or struggled in difficult times, there's no doubt challenges came your way.

Many entrepreneurs neglect self-care and work much more than they should, often resulting in burn-out and lower productivity. With **September being Self-Care Awareness Month**, this is the time to slow down, take time to focus on yourself, and successfully move closer toward your goals.

The good news is that regardless of how things have gone up until now, you can reposition your focus to make a big splash and finish off the year strong.

1. Mid-Year Resolutions

Most people are so used to New Year's resolutions that it's practically hardwired into our DNA. The thing is, we aren't strictly tied to the calendar. Any day can be the start of a new era. Finish the year off well by making some midyear resolutions. Get a head start before the rush and stress of the holidays wear you down and go into next year with tons of momentum.





2. Milestones

It's smart to have your major goals for the end of the year in mind, but the path to reach those goals is most easily managed through a series of smaller accomplishments. Set mini-goals and time frames for each step of the way and tackle it in bite-sized portions. Psychologists call this compartmentalization. The idea is if you look at the big picture it is easy to become overwhelmed. Smaller goals, on the other hand, seem much more doable.

3. Breaks

Along with having a series of milestones, it's important to have a series of small breaks along the way, too. Taking a breather now and then will help keep you motivated and help you recharge your batteries instead of becoming burned out and overwhelmed. Not only does working at such a frenzied pace lead to a decrease in quality, but it's also bad for your health. No matter how much you have going on in your business, make time for downtime.

4. Slow and Steady Wins

You may feel a lot of pressure to try and get everything done before the end of the year. Just remember that steady progress will help you get to your goal faster than trying to stay in fifth gear the whole way. You don't sprint your way through a marathon. Just stay persistent and steady and don't let the tasks become insurmountable in your mind. Remember, it's good to set goals to try and meet, but if it takes you a month or two longer there is nothing wrong with that.

5. Outside Interests

Your business goals are very important, but don't let them completely consume your life. It might seem counterintuitive to think about anything else while you still have a deadline but be sure to maintain some outside interests. What is it that you enjoy? Who are the people you like to spend time with? What completely takes your mind off of work and makes you feel good? This is imperative to reaching your goals and will increase the quality and quantity of your work.

6. You Are Your Best Asset

No matter what is happening with your professional life, the most important thing to take care of is you. All the success in the world doesn't matter if you can't enjoy it. You don't need to slack off and ignore your responsibilities, but you do need to make sure that you are healthy. September is Self-Care Awareness Month. Dedicate at least 20 minutes a day to improving self-care. If things get very overwhelming, contact a mental health professional. They are trained for situations like this, and they can help. There is nothing to ever feel embarrassed about, either.

7. Think Ahead

Sometimes a project, business plan, or deadline may become so all-consuming that it completely overwhelms you. Ironically, something that may help is to start concentrating on other work projects. What else do you have on your plate that you've been neglecting? This may sound like it only adds pressure, but when you free your mind of what it is most focused on, ideas start to flow and things don't seem as difficult as you first thought. A finish line can be the scariest part of a project because it is so final. So, don't think of it as a final end. Think of it as just another step.

The Takeaway

The world around us is constantly changing as both consumers and businesses alike deal with the challenges presented by Covid-19. You can't really control the outside world, but you can take charge of how you conduct your business, how you care for yourself, your mindset, how you prepare, and how you achieve success. Decide today to finish the year off strong. No matter what has happened up to this point, the next few months can be your best ever.



Angela Civitella is an Executive, a Business Leadership Coach and the Founder of Intinde.



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Don't Be The "Hot Mess" Boss

5 communication habits of the emotionally intelligent leader

By Liz Uram

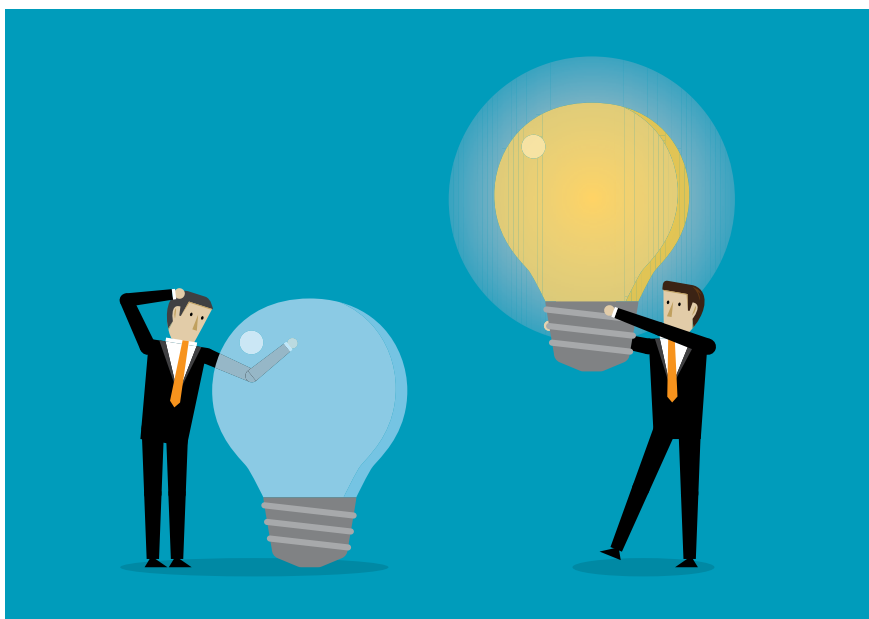
We've all seen it. The leader who receives bad news in a meeting and with a loud outburst of disgust, slams their fist on the table. Or, the leader who becomes overcome by their emotions and breaks down in tears. From one emotional extreme to the other, neither of these leaders instill confidence or trust in their team. Working for an emotionally unstable boss results in a **Group Think Culture** or an **Eggshell Culture**.

A Group Think Culture is formed when the group realizes that the only acceptable response to the boss's latest and greatest idea is agreement. Have you ever sat in a meeting where the whole group just did the 'smile and nod'? If so, you have experienced group think. Leaders who are prone to impulsive outbursts when they feel like they are being questioned create a culture where people are afraid to do anything but go along.

An Eggshell Culture is when everyone is 'walking on eggshells' and that is no fun either. This is created when you have a leader who goes from one extreme to the other. You never know what you're going to get. It all depends on their mood that day. One minute everything is fine. The next minute they are in a rage because traffic was a nightmare and they are running late. They are an emotional hot mess.

You clearly do not want to do create either of those cultures, and in almost all cases they are created unintentionally. That's the scary part. The leaders don't realize the impact they have. They lack emotional intelligence.

Simply put, emotional intelligence is your ability to cope with adversity. When people are doing what you want them to do and your plans are working out the way you hoped, life is easy. But, how do you react when people aren't doing what you want them to do and your plans aren't unfolding the way you had hoped? That's the true test.



The good news is that emotional intelligence is a skill that can be developed over time. Just follow these five communication habits of emotionally intelligent leaders:

1. Self-awareness. Most leaders are not intentionally creating negative workplace cultures. They just aren't aware of how their reactions can impact other people and create a sense of uneasiness. The emotionally intelligent leader is not only aware of the impact of their words they are also aware of what message they are communicating through their facial expressions and body language. They understand that the perceptions others have of them, real or imagined, impact how their message is received. They strive to develop a heightened level of self-awareness through feedback, self-reflections, and assessments that can help them understand their natural personality style.

2. Positivity. The emotionally intelligent leader pays close attention to their thoughts and takes swift action to shift to a positive outlook when they catch themselves getting sucked into negativity. You can train yourself to have more positivity simply by paying more attention. What do you think of first thing in the morning? Do you think about your day ahead and say things to yourself like, "This is going to be a hard day"? If so, guess what kind of day you're going to get? A hard day. It's simple, just changing your thought to "Today is going to be a great day" can make all the difference.

3. Mission-minded. The emotionally intelligent leader looks ahead to where they're going. They know that their reactions can either help them or hurt them as they work to achieve their professional and personal goals. They talk about the mission of the company with their team. They know that having a shared sense of purpose will motivate and energize a team in ways that an angry outburst never can. They share the success stories that show the mission in action and help their team see the "why" behind the "what" in everything they do.

4. Resilience. Stress and setbacks are a part of life. How you bounce back from a setback sets the tone for the rest of the team. The emotionally intelligent leader is aware of their stressors and their natural reaction. Do they go into fight mode or flight mode? They take steps to proactively counteract the negative impacts of stress on their life. They understand the serious health effects of long-term stress. One study revealed that 60% of all basic health issues are caused by chronic stress. By controlling their own stress levels, they are better able to help their team walk through stressful situations.

5. Conflict management. The emotionally intelligent leader doesn't accept every invitation to engage in conflict that they get invited to. They understand that conflict is a natural outcome of a group of people working together. Every individual on a team is bringing their own set of

beliefs, values, perceptions, and personality to the workplace. These leaders understand that when a particular person seems "difficult" it's usually just that they are "different." They can see, and appreciate, the strengths that different personalities and backgrounds contribute to the greater whole. They accept individual differences rather than insisting that everyone see things their way.

There you have it. Five communication habits that can increase your ability to handle any situation in stride. Not only will you feel better, you will enjoy the results that come from a team of people who respect and trust you as a leader.



Liz Uram is a nationally-recognized speaker, trainer, consultant, and author. She equips leaders with the tools they need to communicate like a boss so they can make a bigger impact, get better results, and motivate others to do their best. With 20 years of experience, she's developed systems that work. Uram's written four books packed full of strategies leaders can implement to get real results, real fast.



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In The Throes Of Covid Burnout, What Can We Learn From Healthcare's Thrivers?

| Here are a few of the resilience secrets

By Dr. Gary R. Simonds and Dr. Wayne M. Sotile

The pandemic is taking an unmeasurable toll on healthcare workers. They're stressed, exhausted, disillusioned, and burned out. Some are crippled by PTSD. Many are contemplating leaving healthcare altogether. If you're one of the walking wounded—or a leader trying to help a whole team of them stay upright—what's the solution? Is there one?

The answer is no, and also yes. Covid happened. It's still happening. When it's over, there will be other disruptions, other sources of stress and even trauma. That will never change.

That's the no part. The yes part is this: while we can't change the nature of healthcare, we can build ourselves up so we are able to walk out of storms without being destroyed by them.

As we grapple with how to move forward in what feels like a war-torn landscape, we need to study healthcare's thrivers. It feels strange to use the word "thrive" alongside a tragedy like Covid, but we don't mean to be insensitive. We all deserve to find meaning, wonder, and enjoyment in our daily lives. That includes healthcare workers.

Here are a few of the resilience secrets healthcare's "thrivers" have in common:

Thrivers grant themselves permission for self-compassion and self-care. This is the first of two critical factors in building and sustaining resilience. You will need to normalize the concept of self-compassion and self-care, because many people in healthcare wear their self-neglect as a badge of honor. Notice what makes you feel good or bad; what





angers and excites you; and what brings you joy, peace, wonder, or meaning. Make micro- and macro-adjustments as needed.

They nourish and cherish their relationships. This is the second critical factor for healthcare workers. We are social creatures, but the intense work of healthcare can be isolating, and our fatigue after work hours isolates us further. Because we are tired and drained, we may stop going out and developing new friendships. It's critical to stop this cycle and fully commit to nourishing your relationships—with coworkers as well as loved ones.

They debrief the challenges of the day and celebrate the uplifts. Sharing hurtful experiences from the dark side of your work life—disappointments, embarrassment, confrontations, resilience breakdowns, etc.—can build empathy and lessen the pain. When you share (or listen to colleagues as they share), focus on the effect of the experience(s) rather than the details. How did it feel? What were the lessons learned? How could the storyteller have managed the events or his or her responses to them differently? Likewise, make a habit of seeking, collecting, and reflecting on daily uplifts. This is not just a feel-good ploy. Multiple studies support the concept that “collecting” uplifts can significantly boost well-being and counter psychological distress.

They celebrate being part of the healthcare team. In the midst of your daily work, it is important to keep sight of what you and

your colleagues are all trying to do. No matter what part you play in healthcare, your work contributes—it has real meaning, and you should revel in that fact. If you are not directly involved in patient care, your influence may feel more abstract. Try to trace the steps from your particular work to its eventual impact on the care of a single patient who is sick or injured. It's likely that the degrees of separation are very few, no matter your job.

Thrivers demystify and partner with leadership. Work on breaking the “us versus them” mentality. Don't just take comfort in the notion that there's a team dedicated to facilitating your work efforts, but befriend and engage them in your efforts to provide high-quality, high-efficiency work. Seek to understand your leadership's infrastructure; learn how decisions are made and enacted, and identify the key players in your sphere of function. Take any opportunity to meet and chat with them and educate them on your role, and volunteer for institutional committees.

Get involved. Be known; be seen. When there's a problem, don't rail at your administrators. Calmly discuss problems with them and bring a selection of possible solutions.

They maintain healthy habits no matter how busy they are. You must find a balance between working hard and getting enough rest, exercise, and good nutrition, so you can maintain your physical and mental health. A few tips for building healthy habits:

- **Commit to getting frequent exercise**—even if only in 15-minute bursts during your work break. Schedule movement into your calendar and show up for it no matter what.

- **Seek balance in your food/drink intake.** Discuss your diet with a nutritionist and learn to cook some healthy meals at home (restaurant food is loaded with sugar and fat!).

- **Bring healthy snacks to work** so you won't be tempted to indulge in junk food. Apples, oranges, celery, and nuts are good options—just watch your portion control.

- **Save sodas for occasional treats.** Drink water or diluted fruit juice instead. Stay hydrated!

- **Practice good sleep hygiene.** Avoid extended naps during the day; limit non-sleep-related activities in your bedroom; keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool. Avoid alcohol and screen time just before bed and clear troubling thoughts by focusing on positive events.

They take “humanity breaks,” large and small. If you feel captive to the world of near-constant multi-tasking and endless demands happening under artificial lights and accented by unpleasant sights and smells, take short breaks to focus on positivity, quiet, laughter, fresh air, and humanity. Enjoy a brief break in the morning and another respite in the afternoon for coffee, chatting with colleagues, or meditation. If possible, consider a weekly extended humanity break, where you step away from responsibilities for an hour or two in the middle of the workday. Leave the premises, have lunch, take a walk, soak up some sun, or run a pleasant errand.

They create schedules and stick to them. In the face of utter chaos, creating a schedule gives you a sense of control and can improve your efficiency and efficacy. Buy a nice planner and break the workday into concentrated bundles of related work. In your off-time schedule, include meals, self-care, exercise, reading, studying, play, chores, intimacy, and sleep. Repeat the mantra, “If it is not planned, it will not likely occur.”

They steer clear of perfectionism. If nothing is ever good enough, you may overthink and fret compulsively over every detail of everything you do. Make an effort to eliminate the concept of perfection from your thinking and from your approach to your work. Beware of signs of maladaptive perfectionism, such

as chronic procrastination, being overly cautious and thorough in tasks, excessive checking, and avoiding trying new things and risking making mistakes. Develop, instead, a quest for excellence. Remind yourself that excellence always leaves room for improvement. You can strive for success while allowing yourself to be less than perfect.

Finally, those who end up thriving over the long haul aren’t afraid to reach out for help when they need it.

We all have a breaking point and some reach it sooner than others. There’s nothing shameful

in a physician, clinician, or any healthcare worker going to a leader or a mental health professional and saying “I’m not okay right now.”

Covid has shown us that we desperately need to shift the culture inside healthcare organizations. We need to break the “mental health” stigma, we need to fix systemic issues that exacerbate these problems, and we need to give people the tools and support they need to build up their resilience. These are huge tasks, but our people are worth it.

• • •



Gary R. Simonds, MD, MHCDS, and Wayne M. Sotile, PhD, are coauthors of [*Thriving in Healthcare: A Positive Approach to Reclaim Balance and Avoid Burnout in Your Busy Life*](#) (Huron|Studer Group Publishing, 2019, ISBN: 978-1-62218-108-7, \$32.00), *The Thriving Physician: How to Avoid Burnout by Choosing Resilience Throughout Your Medical Career* (Huron|Studer Group Publishing, 2018, ISBN: 978-1-62218-101-8, \$32.00), and *Building Resilience in Neurosurgical Residents* (B Wright Publishing, 2015, ISBN: 978-0-69244-951-6, \$24.95).

Dr. Simonds is a highly experienced clinical and academic neurosurgeon. He is a professor at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, the Virginia Tech School of Neuroscience, and the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine. **Dr. Sotile** is the Founder of the Sotile Center for Resilience and the Center for Physician Resilience, in Davidson, North Carolina. He is an international thought leader on resilience and work/life balance for busy professionals.

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Tips To Influence The (Negative) Workplace Into A Positive One

| It all starts with your mindset

 By **Lizette Volkwyn**

Think about a baby's laughter. It is one of the most contagious sounds when heard; you are bound to start smiling and eventually, break out in laughter, too.

Imagine if you could be like the baby's laughter in your place of work. The one everyone wants to be around. The one that management depends on to soften the blows of reality, hard times, and pressure.

A few years back, I walked into a new company and from the first interaction, I experienced a sense of gloom – from the receptionist, the PA, to the sales team. All I could think of was "I got my job cut out for me today!"

It turned out that a section 189 was called, and everyone feared being retrenched and no one felt like being cheerful or could not care less how it affected the workplace.

The feeling of 'doom and gloom' and a lot of anxiety is what a lot of us are experiencing today. How can you, as an individual, change this and flip the switch to inspire your other colleagues of the good in every day?

It All Starts with Your Mindset

Here's a quick exercise: Think of one of the funniest moments in your life. Feel the fun, the positive energy, the 'I am in control' moment. Are you feeling it?

Think of another great moment. Breathe in the confidence, smell the success, feel the good vibe, hear the cheers...can you feel it? Your mood just changed, didn't it?

Good, now take it one step further and put that feeling deep in your heart, bottle that magic, hold on to it and make sure you can access it whenever you need it.

You may probably say that it is not the same. Here's the **TRUTH**: that is exactly what happens when we bring energy into the workplace.

People Project What They Perceive

As an NLP Practitioner, we have a saying: 'Perception is projection'. This means that when you think something bad is going to happen, you already project and perceive a bad outcome before it even happened.

You always have a choice to decide how to feel, and this brings me to the following tips on how to influence the energy in the workplace.

1. Ground Your Emotions to a Positive Outcome

No matter the projected outcome, park your emotion and find a positive solution - no matter what. One of my clients had a situation where their division was closing down; everyone was devastated. Through my

coaching efforts, my client made a mind shift change and made a conscious decision to not let it affect him and immediately started looking for lessons learned and a new opportunity.

By having a plan B and plan C, made him feel in control and could bring his energy of hope and solutions to the rest of the team. Before we knew it, everyone found an alternative position within the company and they stood tall as the most adaptable team and individuals within the company.

2. Showcase Your Magic

Not everyone can be confident-bubbly-personalities, however when you deliver your work with vigour, excitement and a mentality of “watch the magic evolve”, people have no other choice but to react and become more positive and energetic.

3. Don't Adopt, Change

It is so easy to walk into your office, shrug the off vibe and choose to detach yourself to your desk, but how does that serve your productivity, mood and energy? Or in a remote working world, where you don't engage with any of your colleagues in the weekly meetings.

Exactly within minutes, you will find yourself miserable and everything around will be going pear-shape.

You have the power within to change the vibe. Remember the magic bottle of happiness you have put in your heart? Go and get it and sprinkle it all over the place.

4. Ignore Negativity - Influence the Energy

I am not saying ignore your friend in need, and show no compassion. Do not allow the negative energy to rub off on you. You have to make the mindful decision to stand tall, and influence the energy by starting off by greeting everyone with a smile. That's right: everyone within the negative group. People need to feel support, love and happiness. Feeling loved, makes you question any negative vibes and helps you think more solution-orientated and goal-focussed.

5. Walk with Confidence, Embrace Who You Are, Stay True to YOU

Lastly, confidence is an inside job and the only way you find confidence within is to embrace who you are.

Do you have a colleague that just walks the talk and seems as if he/she is a smooth operator? They embrace who they are, no matter the energy. They stay true to who they are.

Thus, even if the world collapse under the negativity of the pandemic, don't let the pandemic become you. Stay true to what you are capable of, embrace you and walk with confidence.

Life is hard enough, and you cannot let life become you.

Today is a good day to choose the right mindset to influence the world, your colleagues and your friends. Become the energy you need to be the very best we can be.

• • •



Lizette Volkwyn is an internationally sought-after Master Life Coach, Published Author and a Human Lie Detector. She is on a mission to positively impact a 100,000 Confidently Stepping Up tribe members in less than two years. Lizette has completed over 20,000 one-on-one coaching hours, and with clients in more than 20 countries, her coaching practice is truly international. She has also shared the stage with international thought leaders such as Robin Banks, Russell Fox and Justin Cohen. In 2018, Lizette was one of the top three Emerging Entrepreneurs for Businesswoman of South Africa and also a finalist for Margaret Hirsh's Businesswoman of the Year. In 2019, she was a nominee for Changemaker SA. In 2021, she is a nominee for the Business Excellence Awards for Coaches and Mentors. She is an international keynote speaker, but she calls South Africa her home.



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Get To Know Yourself Better

Cultivating your own conversational style allows you to work well with others

 By [Nicklas Balboa](#)

Hybrid-work models, alongside the pandemic, are seemingly here to stay. So what have we learned from the last year?

If you want to work well with others in an office that shifts from in-person to digital, then it's time to get to know yourself better. And the best way to do that, is by striking up a conversation.

New Diggs

Whether you've returned to the office or not, chances are you've worked with individuals and teams in a remote capacity. While remote work was a necessary adaptation to the virulent virus, many workers—including Zoom's CEO Eric Yuan—expressed their fatigue from the difficulties of endless virtual meetings.

Now it appears that hybrid-work models—a few days a week on-site and off-site—are the next disruption to workplaces. While hybrid-work sounds like a step in the right direction, it presents even more conversational challenges.

Online Versus Offline Personality

It's no secret that working together in person creates a special, humankind of interplay. People ebb and flow throughout the day—in a shared space—which leads to our normative social rules of engagement.

Take that process online, and some of that connection is lost—even depersonalized. And to the surprise of many, that can change your behavior.

It's a spectrum of change ranging from good to bad. For example, perhaps video-chat conversations have helped you to think more before speaking—due a lack of side conversations during the long waits in between speaker turns—however you tend to cut people off more—because it's hard to get a word in edgewise.

It doesn't stop there. Zoom is only one of a dozen potential applications that workers communicate through. Within each one, people develop conversational norms. For example, Slack allows for rapid communication amongst teams, so that problems can get solved quicker and more seamlessly than via email. On the flip side, the ease of use—that makes the application so convenient—also acts as a source of stress and anxiety when you can't get away from it.

With all of these moving targets, some of our conversational habits slip by unnoticed. After all, we are human, and not eagle-eyed. But with a little preparation and guidance, you can have a say in how you act, feel, and think on and offline.

Blind Spots

All humans have blind spots. They help us navigate quickly and efficiently in a world that bombards us with more than enough data to send anyone into overload. Blind spots—especially the unhealthy ones—become roadblocks that prevent us from connecting with others.

You might think that the answer to overcoming these blind spots is to turn inwards. That's the first step. However, you can't do it all alone. That's why they are called blind spots. It takes practice in live conversations to identify the gaps in understanding between yourself and others.

Conversational Glasses™ Exercise

The easy way to identify blind spots—so that you can decide how you show up in daily conversations—is through the conversational glasses exercise.

Yes, like sunglasses! And with these glasses, you can take control of conversational habits—the first step towards raising your Conversational Intelligence® (C-IQ).



C-IQ Conversational Glasses™ by Roxanne Panero of The CreatingWE® Institute

How to Make Your Own Conversational Glasses

- **Step 1: Pick a frame.** Framing a conversation allows you to formulate a plan. Ask yourself, “Do I want to take a deeper look into my online or offline conversational habits?”
- **Step 2: Pick a lens.** Instead of filtering light, this conversational lens filters behaviors that either open up people to connect, or close them down in fear and anxiety. The table contains a few examples of healthy, oxytocin-producing behaviors and unhealthy, cortisol-producing behaviors. Oxytocin is a biochemical that helps us open up, connect, and bond for healthy conversations.

Cortisol is a hormone that's necessary for regulating stress, immunity and metabolism. Too much cortisol can negatively impact the quality of our health and conversations. Select one behavior from each list, and then write them down—see the world as the brain sees it—the good and the bad in simultaneity. One of our common blind spots involves filtering the good or the bad, one in exchange for the other.

Healthy Behaviors	Unhealthy Behaviors
<i>Oxytocin Producing</i>	<i>Cortisol Producing</i>
Listen to connect with others	Emotions detract from listening
Ask questions you don't have answers to	I remember, therefore I know
Stimulate healthy	Focus on convincing others discussion

- **Step 3: Try them on!** Now that you have framed your mind with a balanced conversational lens, it's time to strike up a couple of conversations. Ask yourself, “How often am I engaging in healthy behaviors with others?” and “How often am I engaging in unhealthy behaviors with others?” When you find what is working, cultivate those healthy channels of communication. And when you find out what the blind spots are, ask yourself how you can regulate the behavior so that you can focus on building healthier connections!



Nicklas Balboa is a researcher and Project Manager at [The CreatingWE Institute](#). Since joining The Institute in 2017, Nicklas worked alongside founders Judith E. Glaser & Richard D. Glaser on a myriad of Conversational Intelligence (C-IQ) projects. Nicklas is the Manager of the Institute's Catalyst Tools and curated the WE-IQ TV Neuroscientist Interviews. He authors a blog on [The Neuroscience of Conversations](#) for Psychology Today. Key research interests include cognitive and brain sciences as they relate to interpersonal relationships.

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The Business Value Of Getting People's Names Right

| Discover 4 tips for nailing name pronunciation

 By **Praveen Shanbhag**

In 2013, Under Armour was an upstart sports apparel company when it landed basketball superstar Steph Curry. While the headline is history, what's less known is why he ended up signing there: Because Nike botched it. One Nike official repeatedly [mispronounced Curry's first name](#) in the pitch meeting.

Nike's loss was Under Armour's gain—an estimated \$14 billion in brand value.

Messing up people's names has a cost. In a recent NameCoach survey, we found that people whose names are mispronounced often feel annoyed, disrespected, alienated, or unimportant. And it happens far more often than companies realize. In the same study, 44% of participants said their name had been mispronounced in an interview. This is happening across workplaces, including by CEOs and HR leaders.

It's a problem that companies can't afford to keep making.

What's in a Name?

People's names are deeply personal. There are family names, fathers' names, names in honor of relatives who have passed. There are names that are cultural, names that are incidental. There are names grabbed from favorite characters or created because a parent liked the way the syllables sound.

More fundamentally, names are the first sense of self that we have; your name is the initial identifier that connects you to yourself.

When we mispronounce someone's name, we've telegraphed that we've distorted that person's sense of identity. It can be subtle—but it's there. The more it happens, the more it can feel like death by a thousand cuts.

In the workplace, accurately pronouncing someone's name is vital to recruiting and retaining talented employees. In the recruiting and interviewing process, using a candidate's name can build initial rapport and help a company stand apart. Done right, it can help a new employee feel at home during onboarding and orientation.

Pronouncing a colleague's name correctly also contributes to psychological safety, that belief that you can speak up at work without being afraid of scorn or reprisal. A recent [Harvard Business Review article](#) noted that psychological safety has been "[well established](#)" as a critical driver of high-quality decision making, healthy group dynamics and interpersonal relationships, greater innovation, and more effective execution in organizations." On the flip side, people whose names are perceived to be hard to pronounce are often marginalized in the workplace. Colleagues, afraid of getting a name wrong, either point to that person to speak or ignore them entirely.



4 Ways to Improve Name Pronunciation at Work

Don't jeopardize your workforce talent because you haven't learned to correctly pronounce people's names. A workplace isn't inclusive if people's names are routinely and purposefully mispronounced. When there is a perceived lack of effort in learning the authentic pronunciation of a name, an employee may not feel valued, respected or even motivated - and this ultimately impacts productivity, not to mention the bottom line.

Here are 4 tips to improve name pronunciation in the workplace.

1. Ask, how do you pronounce your name?

Sometimes it's as simple as asking someone. Then it's important to listen, repeat, and make sure you get the name right. Ask, too, if you've got it right, and try to remember so you won't need to ask again. This won't always be received as well as not needing to ask in the first place, but it's an important start. This works well in unplanned meetings where you have not had the opportunity to use a tool or do your research beforehand.

2. Do your homework

Whenever possible, do your homework beforehand. There are a variety of resources available, but beware

that pronunciations may differ, for example, "Saoirse could be 'SEER-shah' or 'SUHR-shah' and Henri could be 'HEHN-ree' or 'awn-REE'. There are new robust tools available that include not only a database of recorded names but also algorithms that help pinpoint the right one.

3. Take notes

Barack Obama was well-known for his attention to correct pronunciation—but it didn't come naturally. His staff included phonetic spellings of names and places in his daily briefing notes, or the person briefing him would coach him on how to pronounce the names. Former President Obama would privately practice pronouncing a foreign leader's name a number of times before ever saying it publicly. He was also known to check with people to make sure he'd pronounced their names correctly.

4. Build a company culture that values names

Build the correct pronunciation of employee and client names into your corporate culture, your operational systems, and your day-to-day practices. Make accurate pronunciation a priority, much as you would get a phone number or email address correct the first time. In addition, demand that managers set the right example for their teams, and reinforce the importance of this practice through team meetings and training.

Most importantly, don't leave anyone behind. Getting people's names right isn't an accident—it's a decision. It takes work. But, as Nike learned the hard way, getting it wrong can be a very expensive mistake.

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Praveen Shanbhag, Ph.D. is the Founder and CEO of [NameCoach](#), a company that supports inclusion, equity and belonging initiatives with an accurate audio name pronunciation platform.



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The Key To Knowing What's Important

Sound, science-based ways for us to understand motives and to lead accordingly

By Ron Karr

In order to achieve their team's or company's overall vision, leaders must have the buy-in of every employee. Their motivation (one of the pillars of emotional intelligence) cannot be merely external, carrot-and-stick incentives, as Daniel Pink so ably pointed out in his book, *Drive*. In most situations, motivation must be intrinsic, connected to each person's hopes and aspirations. To put it another way, **people do things for their reasons, not yours.**

This is not only a key aspect of emotional intelligence (theirs and yours), but also a key to effective leadership, getting the buy-in

necessary for sustained progress towards an ideal outcome.

As simple as this may sound, however, it is not easy to discover an employee's hopes and dreams, much less discover ways to help them support your own.

How and Why Our Brains Respond

As human animals, we have evolved specific mechanisms that control how we react to stimulus. Hormones in particular are the chemical compounds our bodies produce that, among other things, have effects on our moods and behaviors. Knowing how these affect responses can

help us better understand the reactions of those around us and become more aware of what motivates them.

Of the three major hormones we are considering, cortisol, at relatively low levels, promotes a sense of normalcy and engagement.¹ However, when levels are elevated, it heightens our sense of readiness for action and resistance. The cause of stress may be a physically dangerous situation but is probably not. The problem is our bodies can't tell the difference. When our cortisol level rises, we're on alert, hormonally speaking, our focus narrows, and we're less likely to process things that don't relate to the stress we feel. Only when our brains send the all-clear signal will we feel open to new information and those who bring it.

The second hormone, oxytocin, is produced in response to stimuli such as words or gestures interpreted as friendliness, interest, or support.² We feel



a sense of closeness, trust, or connection and are more likely to respond in kind. Our distant ancestors developed this response when it came to successful procreation as well as connecting with fellow tribe members. The resulting, more pro-social behavior fostered cooperation, trust, and a greater chance of survival.

The third hormone, dopamine, is a built-in reward system for activities or actions that satisfy our needs.³ Besides the pleasure reward, dopamine boosts our mood, motivation, and attention, as well as regulating our movement, our learning capacity, and our emotional responses.

While there is much more to say on these and other evolutionary traits of our fellow humans, an awareness of these three hormones, in particular, is invaluable when it comes to understanding what's important to our employees—and what motivates them.

The Fight-or-Flight Dilemma

As a case in point, some years ago, a line supervisor at one of my client's plants was infuriated by a worker's constant mobile phone use while on the job as a welder. An important project had been delayed and, in the supervisor's mind, the only answer was to apply increasing pressure to "get off the damn phone!" As with many such cases before and since, I knew that the employee's response to the supervisor was a cortisol-fueled,

fight-or-flight reaction. Both parties had narrowed their focus, and neither was able to imagine, much less process a creative solution.

After conducting a simple role-playing exercise with the supervisor, he approached the employee with questions about his long-term goals—which were to earn a master welder certification. The de-escalation very likely lowered everyone's cortisol levels and the supervisor's interest in the employee's future undoubtedly raised oxytocin levels to the point of engendering some trust. The conversation turned to ways of achieving master welder certification, including working more efficiently on assigned projects. The subject of cell phone use never came up.

Heart and Mind

All too often, executives and managers strive for mental agreement with the tasks to be accomplished and the goals to be met—the **how** part of the equation. Very often, this ignores **why** people do what they do, their motivations, their heart, if you will. This lack of context results in tasks without purpose and speed without direction.

As leaders, if we aspire to influence others, our responsibility is to make sure the mental environment is conducive to conversation. That means having an awareness of cortisol reactions and finding ways of communicating that don't trigger them. Instead, we

seek to know what motivates the other and, in so doing, enlist the natural responses of connection and genuine reward. The object is not to control or manipulate others' hormonal responses, but *to understand what is going on inside*, and to change *our* behavior—in order to help everyone find mutually beneficial solutions and buy in to them.

Notes

¹Lindsey Konkel, "Cortisol: Everything You Need to Know About the 'Stress Hormone,'" *Everyday Health*, September 6, 2018, <https://www.everydayhealth.com/cortisol/guide/>.

² Jade Wu, "The Power of Oxytocin," *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, February 11, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-savvy-psychologist/202002/the-power-oxytocin>.

³"Dopamine," *Psychology Today*, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/dopamineR>

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Ron Karr, Former President of the National Speakers Association, is a nationally recognized keynote speaker, executive leadership consultant, and author of [The Velocity Mindset®](#) (Amplify Publishing, May 2021). He may be contacted directly at Karr Associates, Inc. (ronkarr.com).



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The Source Of Loneliness

Create your own action list of things you will start, stop or change.

By Tim Connor

Many people feel a dramatic sense of loneliness that can lead to depression, increased stress and a lack of purpose or mission in life. Why is this? Is it due to past mistakes or decisions, expectations, a general lack of purpose in life or something more?

I have been lonely. I know many people who suffer or have suffered the negatives of this life condition, but in the end, if we are lonely it was, is and always will be due to our own reasons, causes or beliefs and not due to others' behavior or actions. You can take issue with this belief, but let me ask you – Have you ever felt lonely? For a few hours or a few years and the reasons are? Blame, a lack of personal responsibility, anger, grief, fear, arrogance, ego or some other mindset or belief?



Loneliness - feeling sad through being without friends or company. Done or lived life without companionship or support from other people. I disagree with this definition – loneliness has nothing to do with having other people in your life or keeping busy 24/7.

Loneliness is a mindset, an attitude or letting what you perceive as lack. Loneliness will not be overcome just by bringing more stuff or people into your everyday life. Don't believe me? Well - research and studies over the years have shown that some of the loneliest people are wealthy, successful or famous – go figure.

Symptoms of Loneliness

Loneliness has many attributes and these can vary depending on our personal definition of this malaise but a few of the common ones are – despair, discouragement, a loss of purpose, aimlessness, uncertainty or a loss of self-worth, anxiety, stress, insecurity or immaturity. The problem is that many of these attitudes, emotions or mindsets can also lead to other even more dramatic outcomes such as suicide. There are several recent ones that bear witness to this.

Causes of Loneliness

If you have read the above paragraph you will see that many of the causes are related in some way to these but the essential causes are; being out of touch with reality, an unwillingness to take responsibility for life with all its ups and downs and positives and negatives.

Many lonely people actually want to be lonely. Don't believe me? Consider the fact that many people who

have some of the same symptoms but choose not to act or deal with these to change the quality of their life. Many lonely people are just stuck – and why? Because they choose to remain stuck and not change their circumstances.

In the end, if you are lonely and are unwilling to move in a new direction to eliminate these feelings or emotions this is your choice and not caused by the actions, behavior or decisions of others.

The Benefits of Loneliness

You might wonder why I would even include this section feeling that there are no benefits to this emotional condition but I choose to differ and why? Well, for starters if you are experiencing a sense of loneliness this can give you an opportunity to reflect on its causes, reasons and consequences giving you the option of remaining in this condition or making the decision to change or do something about it and since this is a choice only you can make you have to ask yourself – do I want to remain here in this situation or is it time do finally do something about it?

During a few bouts with loneliness during my life I realized I had a choice – change something or just continue this victim mentality, which by the way I didn't like or believe I deserved, but in the end, I was lonely simply because that was the choice I made, oh maybe not consciously, but in the end, I had to look in the mirror.

After consideration, contemplation, prayer, self-evaluation and some guidance from a few mentors, I finally realized that life with this mindset lacked any value and whether or not to change course was in my hands.

If You Are Lonely, What Can You Do

I could give you dozens of actions but here are a few simple ones that I would suggest you consider.

- Expose yourself to new people, situations and opportunities.
- Let go of judgmental mindsets.

- Stop blaming life or others for your condition or circumstances.
- Start a hobby or new activity – take dance lessons, join a book club, get involved with your church, volunteer for something – anything.
- Be willing to be honest with yourself about the whys of your loneliness.
- Take a trip, cruise or just take a walk in the park several times a week or year.
- Start a good stuff jar (ask me about this one).
- Create a – my blessings list.
- Focus on what you have not what you have lost or is missing.
- Make some new friends or even acquaintances.
- Try something new (and you don't have to start jumping out of airplanes).
- Get a part time job serving the public (library, a book store, Hospice, server in a restaurant or anything that helps you connect with others).
- Laugh more, read more, and keep learning – anything new.
- Come on – get busy – doing something – anything.
- Turn off the TV and put your iPhone in the closet.
- And please - end the pity party.

In summary, I'll leave you with a simple question – do you want to continue the rest of your life, however much time you have left, in this current state or do you want to change something? Create your own action list of things you will start, stop or change.

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Tim Connor is a global speaker, trainer and bestselling author (over 80 books). During his career, Tim has helped millions of people and hundreds of organizations around the world improve their sales, management and leadership effectiveness, employee performance and life success.



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Price And Priority

| Re-examine your real priorities

 By **Jim Stovall**



Warren Buffett is noted for saying, “People know the cost of everything and the value of nothing.” Products and services may have a price that applies to everyone, but they have a value that will vary widely from person to person. Something that might be worthless to me could be priceless to you.

As a result of these columns that appear around the world each week in newspapers, magazines, and online publications—along with over 50 books that provide my contact information—I hear from a great number of people who want to achieve success and make their lives better. I always try to encourage them to establish priorities.

I believe we can have anything in this life, but we can’t have everything. Often, people tell me

or, more importantly, they tell themselves, what their priorities are. However, in many cases, the evidence does not support what they claim their priorities to be. The greatest measure of what is important to us in our lives is evidenced in how we spend our time and our money. Regardless of what someone tells themselves or tells other people, their calendar and their bank statement reveal the true story.

If you were to ask Americans how much they value books, learning opportunities, and education, most people would likely claim it to be a high priority in their lives. However, it is interesting and disturbing to note that the average American spends ten times more money on lottery tickets than they do on books. Please understand that I have no moral or even financial objection to someone who buys a lottery ticket for entertainment. This is not something I have ever done, but I realize the adage, “Different strokes for different folks,” may apply.

Recent statistics on lottery ticket purchases show that people considered “consistent players,” spend over \$100 per week on lottery tickets. For most of those

people, this goes beyond casual entertainment as it represents a significant amount of money to them and their families. That same \$100 per week invested in an index fund over a working lifetime, would inevitably make them millionaires. Little do those people realize, they are giving up the certainty of becoming a millionaire for the astronomical chance of winning the lottery.

A little less emphasis on lottery tickets and a little more of a priority on books could make a world of difference.

As you go through your day today, re-examine your real priorities.

• • •



Jim Stovall is the President of Narrative Television Network, as well as, a published author of many books including *The Ultimate Gift*. He is also a columnist and motivational speaker.



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Are You Selfless?

Let your actions be of immense value to your leader and to the company

 By **Shu Yeung**

The best HR leaders are those who exhibit selflessness in their day-to-day work. Being selfless means influencing decisions and actions that are best for your business leader and the company, while setting aside your own personal interests or ego, or at least not having a personal agenda as your primary decision-making factor. If you take on a selfless management style, you and your actions will be of immense value to your leader and to the company.

Selflessness can show up in many ways. One way that it can show up is not needing open recognition for the ideas you put forward to your leaders. As HR leaders, our role is to support and coach our leaders.

In this role, our leaders and managers will take our advice. If you are working with a leader who truly values your advice, this will happen all the time. There are times when we may need to develop an agenda or talking points for our leader's all-hands meeting. There are other times when we may need to draft communications around performance, leadership, and organizational changes on behalf of our leader. Being selfless is not being upset when your leader does not give you credit in front of others. No one except for you and your leader needs to know that you wrote part of the communications for the all-hands meeting or for any other communications to employees.





As HR leaders, we help draft communications to be presented to employees. We also help leaders design strategy sessions behind the scenes before they are presented to their leadership teams. Although the general themes of any communication come up over and over again, each communication is unique because each situation is different. The final product will take into account all of the nuances of that specific situation (i.e. audience, timing, actions that have occurred to date, etc.) It is most rewarding when a leader uses our exact words for a communication.

As with any communication from a leader, there will be comments and feedback from employees. It is best to listen to the comments, take the feedback for future improvements and reinforce the messages that were mentioned. What we should not do is suggest that we were involved in drafting the communication as this would end up tarnishing the credibility of our leader, as well as the message itself.

The satisfaction that you receive knowing that your leader took your advice and used what you wrote should be proof enough of your leader's view of the value you bring. It is a great compliment when we can give advice to our leaders about how to communicate with their team members. Leaders will end up respecting you and trusting you more if you take on a selfless style. Granted, all of us need a sense of recognition for our accomplishments and it is important that people take notice of our contributions. However, if you are selfless by putting

the good of the organization before yourself, it will be recognized.

Another form that a selfless style can take is defending the decisions made by your leaders. Even when a leader makes a decision that you may not fully agree with, you should always be aligned with your leader in front of others. Sometimes, you will need to explain the actions that your leader takes and the business rationale for them. If you were to say to your leader's team members that you disagreed with a decision that the leader made but that the leader went ahead with it anyway, this will reflect badly on you since you will be seen as working independently and not in partnership with your leader.

Most importantly, being selfless is taking ourselves out of the picture when making decisions for the company. This comes into play when working on compensation, promotions, succession planning, career development, and company policies, to name a few. For example, we may be involved in creating compensation structures and job architecture frameworks for all roles, including HR across the company. In this situation, we should not personalize compensation decisions. We need to step back and always remember to think "big picture" (i.e. what's right for the company) in our decision-making and actions. We should also encourage and influence other leaders and managers to approach matters in a similar fashion. Otherwise, narrow decision-making will have negative consequences for the company.

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Shu Yeung has over 20 years of experience as a strategic and operational HR executive with experience from mid and large sized companies such as American International Group (AIG), Novartis and IHS to small companies. Shu has supported C-suite leaders and global teams, and has worked in Europe and Asia.



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