

## Quick Summary of Quiet Leadership

### Six Steps to Transforming Performance at Work

David Rock

#### Step 1 – Think about thinking

1. *Let them do all the thinking* - The best way to improve performance is by helping people think better; doing this requires letting other people think, then helping them think in more efficient ways, instead of telling them what to do. John Whitmore - "To tell denies or negates another's intelligence. To ask honours it".
2. *Focus on solutions* – Being solution focussed means focusing only on the way ahead. Looking into the problem reinforces the brain circuits associated with the problem. Focusing on problems leads to blame, excuses and justifications. Focusing on the solutions creates new energy in our minds and is a step towards creating new mental maps. It is about asking "what shall we do about this?" instead of "why did this happen?".
3. *Remember to stretch* – Any time we try out a new activity, behaviour or way of thinking, we are literally forging a new pathway in our brain, creating circuits that don't currently exist. Doing this takes energy and focus and requires intensive use of our conscious mind. Leaders can help bring about change and make change long lasting by stretching people, taking people to the edge of their comfort zone and normalizing the emotions they may feel along the way. Michael Csikszentmihalyi in his book 'Flow' talks of the time when we have the strongest positive emotion comes from a zone in between boredom and anxiety.
4. *Accentuate the positive* – what we need is positive feedback especially when we are learning a new behaviour or habit. Positive feedback helps embed new mental maps. People get on an average a couple of minutes of positive feedback each year, versus thousands of hours of negative criticism. Timothy Gallwey talks of performance = potential minus interference ( $p = P - I$ ). People's fear, imagination, self-doubt got in the way of performance and that underneath that all had the natural skills that if allowed to surface would enable us to play quite well. A new approach is needed to transform people's performance in the way we give feedback. Instead of a 'feedback sandwich', the new approach would look at the following questions
  - a. *What did you do well and what did you discover about yourself as a result?*
  - b. *What were the highlights of this project and what did you learn?*
  - c. *What went well and would like to talk about how to do more of this?*
  - d. *What did you do well and what impact do you think this had on everyone else?*

Marshall Goldsmith has a technique called 'Feedforward' where instead of discussing an issue that did not work well in the past, we discuss what we would like to change in the future and explore ways to make this possible.

5. *Put process before content* – having a clear structure of conversation helps move the conversation forward smoothly. We start by asking permission and agreeing to a context for the conversation. By establishing good process for dialogues, before getting lost in the details of a conversation, you are more likely to have discussions that are useful rather than just interesting. Then we follow the Dance of Insight Model (Placement -> Ask thinking questions -> Clarifying)
6. *Choose your focus* – This model helps us with all of the ones talked above – thinking about thinking, focus on solutions, stretch, and have good process. The Choose your Focus model describes five mental frames we can approach any situation from – vision, planning, detail, problem and drama. Having a simple, easy to remember model helps us see our mode of thinking quickly, and then choose a more useful way of thinking. This model has wide application in the workplace.

## Step 2 – Listen for potential

1. *Listening for potential* – this means listening generously with the certainty that the person speaking can and will solve their own dilemmas, because the answers are within them. It means listening for people's own insights, energy, possibilities, passion and future. Quiet Leaders encourage and support others in being the best they can be, without saying a word. They listen to people as though they have all the tools they need to be successful and could simply benefit from exploring their thoughts and ideas out loud.
2. *The Clarity of distance* – Leaders can be more helpful if they stay out of the details and interact with the people at a high level, looking for patterns and qualities in activities that cannot be seen when we are too close. We get too close when we have too much detail, see things through our own filters, have an agenda or get engaged by emotion. The Clarity of distance model helps us to identify what's getting in the way of natural intelligence, so that we can then go back to listening for potential. It is a model with broad application that can make a big difference to our self-awareness and therefore our ability to impact others.
3. There are four mental frames that get in the way of clarity – details, filters, agendas and hotspots.

- a. Lost in the details - Listening to people with potential requires we stay above the details, otherwise we get lost in the tangled forest of information and can't see what is going on.
- b. Misled by our filters – filters are the unconscious mental frames through which we see the sum of our assumptions, expectations, predictions and decisions about anything. When we listen through filters, we are fitting people into predetermined boxes, rather than helping them be all they could be.
- c. Having an agenda – An agenda clouds our ability to listen to people as their potential. We are suddenly too close, we are lost in our own agenda instead of seeing the other person's possibilities.
- d. Hot spots – A hot spot is a charged issue for us – an issue that we are lost in the emotions of. Here the primitive brain takes over during certain situations and we stop listening to the higher order intelligence. We act impulsively, doing things that we wouldn't normally do.

### Step 3 – Speak with Intent

1. *Succinct* – Quiet Leaders are succinct when they speak. They are able to communicate their ideas using very few words. Focusing on being succinct makes the speaker get clearer about the core message, before they speak. Being succinct also provides the listener to process bite sized information, rather than digest several minutes of ideas at once. Being succinct requires you to think, to decide quickly on the essence of what you want to say, and to say it in as few words as possible, focusing on using visual words.
2. *Specific* – Quiet Leaders are specific when they speak. They are able to figure out and communicate the core of the idea they want to transmit. Being specific requires that we pay close attention to what other people say, to make an extra effort to mentally note the key points so we can be accurate and detailed in our responses.
3. *Generous* – Quiet Leaders are generous when they speak. They speak so that the listener can immediately understand and relate to the concepts they want to communicate. Being generous is about being committed to the other person getting your message. It means putting yourself in their shoes when you are speaking, taking care to make sure every word you use is just right, and focussing on their needs in the conversation. It also means sharing a bit of your humanity.

### Step 4 – Dance towards insight

1. *The four facets of insight* – This describes what goes on when you look at people's faces, before, while and after they have an insight. There are specific mental functions occurring in the brain during insights that give off energy, which you can see if you look for them. The four steps are – awareness of a dilemma, reflection, illumination and motivation.
  - a. *Awareness of a dilemma* - A dilemma is defined as being between opposing desires and not knowing which way to turn. The dilemmas are mental maps in conflict and the leader's job is to help people create new ways of reconnecting their thinking through the moment of illumination. When we first become aware of a dilemma, our face looks a bit unhappy, perplexed. Our eyes might be squinting slightly, we recognize we have a problem, we feel stuck. From a neuroscientific perspective, a dilemma means we have various mental maps in conflict. They have competing values, competing demands for resources, and the brain has not yet worked out how to resolve this conflict by creating a new metamap or by reconfiguring our existing maps.
  - b. *Reflection* – this occurs when we ask questions that make people think deeply. People need time to reflect to be able to make new connections. The brain gives off alpha-band waves when we reflect. Studies have shown that during reflection we are not thinking logically or analysing data- we are using part of our brain used for making links across the whole brain. We are thinking in an unusual way making our unconscious brain to think.
  - c. *Illumination* – this is the moment when a new map is created. Gamma-band waves are seen in the brain at this moment. When we have an illumination experience we are creating a supermap (of other maps) that links many parts of the brain. The creation of this new map gives off substantial energy, energy that can be tapped as a valuable resource.
  - d. *Motivation* – This is the moment immediately following an illumination. When people are in the motivation phase, their eyes are racing ahead, ready to take action. We are energized by new insight, and have neurotransmitters, coursing our brain, inspiring us to want to do something. However the effects of these chemicals pass off quickly.
2. *The Dance of Insight* - This is the structure of the conversations we follow in order to elicit insights from others. It is composed of permission, placement, thinking questions and clarifying.

- a. *Permission* – We ask permission before going into a deeper, more personal layer of conversation. Every time there may be an emotional response to what we are going to say, we ask permission first. Permission lets people feel safer, builds trust and allows you to ask hard questions. Asking permission significantly increases our chance of having a great dance with someone, a dance involving a high level conversation that improves people's thinking.
- b. *Placement* – when we are having a conversation, it is very useful to make sure that both parties are coming from the "same place". Placement is like a combination of setting the scene plus full disclosure plus a statement of intent. Placement gets the other person to start thinking. When you place people in a conversation, you take care of issues like
  - i. Setting the scene
  - ii. How long you would like to speak
  - iii. Where are you coming from?
  - iv. What your goal for the conversation is
  - v. How would you like them to listen
  - vi. What you are looking to achieve from the dialogue
- c. *Repeated placement* – We keep placing people in conversations every question or so, to remind both parties about where they are and where they are trying to get to. This helps both people stay more on track.
- d. *Thinking questions* – These are questions designed to elicit insight. They bring about reflection, which creates more self-awareness, generating a greater sense of responsibility. Learning to ask thinking questions is a powerful resource for transforming performance. Thinking questions are not "why" questions – they are "how" questions. Questions like the ones below could be used to elicit insight.
  - i. How long have you been thinking about this?
  - ii. How often do you think about this?
  - iii. How important is this issue to you on a scale of 1-10?
  - iv. How committed are you to resolve this?
  - v. What impact is this thinking about this issue having on you?
  - vi. How clear is your thinking on the plan?
  - vii. What insights are you having?
  - viii. How could you deepen this insight?
  - ix. Are you clear about what to do next?

- x. How can I best help you further?
- e. *Clarifying* – This is being able to extract the essence of what someone says, focused at a very high level and feed it back to them in a couple of words. Clarifying is about identifying learning and emotions. We give people mini insights when we clarify well. Clarifying requires being prepared to take a risk and trusting your intuition. It is a high level skill that requires some practice. When you clarify, you listen for
  - i. What is the person trying to say?
  - ii. What are they not saying?
  - iii. What is the emotional context inside what they are saying?
  - iv. What is ‘behind’ their words – what do they really feel?
  - v. What is the essence of what they are saying?

### Step 5 – CREATE new thinking

1. *CREATE model* – This describes the different phases in a conversation to improve people’s thinking, following the path of least resistance. It stands for Current Reality, Explore Alternatives and Tap their Energy.
2. *Desired Outcome* – This is the collection of ideas, thoughts, facts and emotions that you would expect to have if you have accomplished something that is important to you.
3. *Current reality* – The first element in the CREATE model. We focus on identifying the landscape of people’s thinking, to identify qualities of their thinking to help them reflect and bring about an illumination. The CREATE model is a guide – it will only work if you listen to your natural curiosity and ask questions as to where you sense the person’s energy is going.
4. *Explore Alternatives* – The second element of the CREATE model. This is when we open up lots of possibilities in a conversation, exploring many ways forward. It is about asking people to think more deeply – and hence we need to make sure we establish permission to do this. Exploring alternative ways to take action after having an insight, instead of just going with ideas, can be a big help in transforming performance.
5. *Tap their Energy* – The energy that is released after having an insight needs to be put into action immediately so we tap the energy while it is there, getting people to flesh out their ideas while they are fresh and commit to take specific actions. It is about helping people to be more specific, setting deadlines, reporting back and doing something tangible.

### Step 6 – Follow up

1. **FEELING model** – This is a way of following up on actions people set for themselves to bring about the creation of a new circuit. It stands for Facts, Emotions, Encourage, Learning, Implications, and New goal.
  - a. *Facts* – Focus on the facts of what can be observed, what was done, not what wasn't. Doing this takes a little awareness and practice; for many people it is a completely new habit.
  - b. *Emotions* – This is checking in on people's emotions. If they had a good experience completing their action, you deepen their wiring by focussing attention on these positive feelings. If they had a difficult time, you can help them put their emotions aside and allow for a more useful conversation to follow.
  - c. *Encourage* – It is about encouraging people generously to help them make the experience a positive one. Acknowledge their efforts, appreciate what they had to do differently, or identify the challenges they faced and surmounted and validate these.
  - d. *Learning* – Focus on learning when you follow up – as a means to improve people's thinking. Questions like these may be helpful.
    - i. What was your big insight this week?
    - ii. What did you find out about yourself?
    - iii. What did you discover about your thinking or habits?
    - iv. What new habit did you notice starting to emerge?
  - e. *Implications* – Asking about implications of what someone has learned means you are giving their new wiring ever more attention, more focus and making links to other parts of their brain. Questions like these may be helpful.
    - i. What are the broader implications of being able to do this now?
    - ii. What impact has this learning had on you?
    - iii. Can you see any other applications of what you have learned here?
    - iv. How else might you use this kind of new thinking?
  - f. *New Goal* – The final part of the FEELING model is to identify the next goal to focus on.
2. The final step to transforming performance is following up with people to help them recognize and therefore further embed the habits they are developing. By doing this in a positive and supportive way, we give people the encouragement they need to turn their delicate circuits into full blown hard wiring.

\*\*\*\*\*