the field

THE SMALL
Extraordinary
Handbook

The Four Principles for Leading an EXTRAORDINARY WORKPLACE

Part 2:
Extraordinary Awareness

THE LOWDOWN

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EXTRAORDINARY AWARENESS

People development is not just for leaders

After running thousands of leaders through particular programs, I started to see an unfortunate pattern. Leaders were 'getting it' however they still needed so much more coaching than organisations were willing to pay in order to be able to transfer that understanding into skills to help develop others. In fact, there are very few leaders I have met along the way who had developed sufficiently to be able to truly shift people. There are just a couple of ways that I have seen leaders be effective in this area.

Firstly, they have developed themselves to the point where they are not their own main focus anymore, others are.

And secondly, it works when leaders are very open and honest about their own need for growth and share it with others, which then becomes a mutual learning journey.

I remember one leader who told me about all the programs he had gone to that had made such a massive impact on his life, including his home life, however when it came to working with his team, he was quite obviously the biggest road block to building his workplace culture. Everyone I spoke to told me of his incompetence in dealing with them as a team. No amount of development was going to turn that around because he hadn't done the internal work. He kept himself distant, kept conversations formal and didn't change small habits that weren't working for him.

Development of the self should be something that organisations invest in for all of their people. It brings people together and creates value for them that bonds them to their work, teams and leaders. When the development of the self is spread through the whole organisation, people start to realise that everyone is on the same journey, and that the work in that area is valuable.

Being Self Aware

First a question: On a scale of 0 (being 'not at all'- unlikely!) and 10 (being a Buddha type state of self awareness!), **how self aware do you think you are?**

0 ---------------- 10
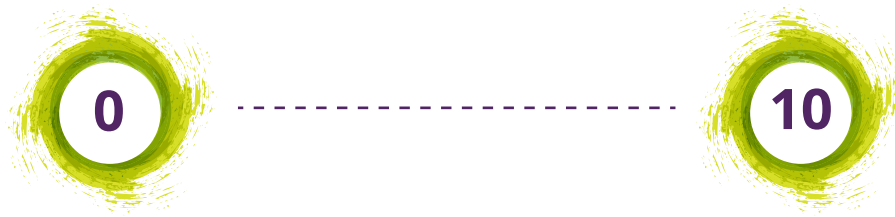
Next: Write out all of the reasons that make you think you ARE self aware, and areas you currently need to work on:

Areas I think I am self aware in are:

Areas I currently think I need to work on are:

Did you struggle with the second question? In reality, we really have no idea do we? Because we are unaware! There are a lot of people who would consider themselves high on self awareness however when we experience their behaviour, our opinion differs, and perhaps it is the same when others experience us. I have been in organisations where the leaders have done every imaginable development on the planet and still exhibit very low awareness of themselves and others.

Self Awareness is basically turning your awareness inward to becoming conscious of your self. This means understanding 1) Our emotions and their impact on ourselves and others; 2) Our values and beliefs which can drive those emotions; and 3) Our strengths as a unique individual which form part of a core confidence.

Two of the biggest challenges we have in creating an Extraordinary workplace with highly self aware people are:

> **We may not all have been exposed to what it takes to be self aware throughout life**

> **We may not have a safe enough working environment to be introspective and grow**

According to the CPP Global Human Capital Report[5] July 2008, billions of dollars are spent annually in the United States alone on solving workplace conflicts which probably comes down to at least two people lacking self awareness. Think about it... you've seen it haven't you? Two people are head to head at work and it takes a whole lot of resources to address issues that generally don't get fully resolved. Low self awareness is a very fragile place to operate from. People usually don't tell us where we are low in self awareness because that is also a risky thing to do. And we are not going to tell ourselves because our brains are totally biased and think we are more aware than we

Self awareness requires a few things:

✓ A desire to be self aware, and an understanding of the benefits this will bring to ourselves and our goals

✓ A path to self awareness that is clear and achievable

✓ An environment that is safe enough to explore that in

Some questions to turn your focus inward:

✓ What do you consider to be your biggest strength?

✓ What are you most scared of sharing with others about yourself? Why?

✓ How often do you recognise your own hypocrisy?

✓ When are you your most real?

✓ What is the greatest attribute you think you could ever master?

✓ How curious are you about what you are capable of?

Focus on your best version

The challenge with leadership is that we need to have a certain level of self awareness of ourselves before we can help others develop it. Leadership (if we look at it in the traditional sense – that it is a certain responsibility within the organisation) can be a very publicly stressful role. This can sometimes overwhelm us from looking internally, and stopping to 'sharpen the saw' as Stephen Covey famously said in his book, The 7 habits of highly effective people[6]. So we fall behind in the self awareness gig. Trouble is we cannot give something we don't have, so leaders move into reaction mode, as does everybody else, and then we end up with an organisation of people responding as well as they can to their external world without the time or inclination to go inward.

In organisational development, as human beings do so well, we leave out the best part of what it is to truly develop. This is probably because it doesn't sound 'businessy' enough. To develop the self sounds almost removed from business outcomes and money, which seems to be what business is all about these days. But what if, while we are doing all of this important business type development, we are missing out on the very things that mean something to people AND helps them to be even better at what they do?

At the Neuroleadership Summit[7] in New York in 2016, Robert Keagan (a Harvard Professor) spoke about his work and book on 'Deliberately Developmental Organisations' like Next Jump and Bridgewater. These organisations are not psychology organisations. Next Jump is an e-commerce tech company and Bridgewater is a hedge fund company. However, they have rigorous processes around learning, self reflection and self development. In fact, this is the core of how they operate. Everyone is there, not because of who they are, but who they are becoming, and their company culture is constructed around 'the becoming' bit. The induction into their company is bold, and asks people if they are ready for such development. Zappos (mentioned at the start of this book) pays people $2000 to leave if they don't think they can align to the culture. Now that is commitment to a culture of development.

How 'deliberately developmental' is your organisation?

How much energy do you all spend on raising self awareness?

It would be interesting to get the thoughts of your colleagues too!

Do the real work

"We already have everything we need".

Pema Chodron[8], an American Tibetan Buddhist, says "We already have everything we need". When she expanded on that, she said that we are the sun and we just have to try to figure out what the clouds are and move them away to see our true nature. This is what developing the self is, and this can happen at work. In fact, work is almost the perfect place for it...

Over the years, we have realised that every human being has the same needs that motivates them to develop themselves. That is:

Everyone wants to know that there is something great about them, because we all know that deep down that is true. We just want our outside world to see that too.

Everyone wants to know that whatever is not right or working within them can be overcome.

People have to see the first point before they can entertain the second. This is not to say that they just want to be told they are special all the time. They just need the environment around them to talk to them specifically sometimes, rather than applying a fictitious perfect mould for them to fit into.

You already have everything you need however there are some clouds. There are parts of all of us that are the lesser version of who we really are. People's Extraordinary minds are not just the lovely stuff. Part of what makes us Extraordinary human beings is our dysfunction, weirdness, idiosyncrasies and bad habits – when turned into allies. As I have developed my Extraordinary mind, I realise there are a number of things about me that I have had to embrace or thank and say goodbye to in my repertoire of colour. Some of those things for me?

- I can sink into periods of feeling depressed

- I can be really negative at times

- I can play things down so that they aren't that great any more

- I can be critical of others and most definitely myself

- I can be annoyingly deep and take simple conversations way too far

- I can be awkward meeting people I don't know (have kissed a number of people on their ears because they thought we were just hugging)

- I can come across as an airhead when I am overdoing enthusiasm (or have had champagne...)

- I am sometimes outright antisocial and find more comfort in being at home with my partner, dog and red wine

- I can push people toward action before they are ready

- I can project things I don't like about myself onto others (easy peasy)

- I sing but gave it up because I forget lyrics

- Pretty sure I have a 5 year olds understanding of politics and history at the age of 45

- I can take really simple things and make them complicated and hard to understand

- I can go through periods of having no idea at all what I am doing in life

What is your dysfunction list? (Liberate yourself and write that stuff down here now!)

Main points:
- You already have everything you need
- The real work in organisations is for people to become more of the best version of who they are

Create the environment

For all the talk of the millennial generation (the generation born between 1982 and 2004), one thing is clear: They do see work just as a means to earn money. Contrary to popular beliefs (ironically from other generations), millennials are incredibly loyal to their organisations however they are looking for a particular criteria with which to apply that loyalty. They are looking for organisations in which development is paramount. If we aren't taking that seriously, then perhaps we need to consider that this generation is going to comprise 75% of the workforce by around 2020. Traditional ways of doing things will not work.

Amy C. Edmondson[9] is the Novartis Professor of leadership and management at Harvard Business School. In her work, she has really focused in on what it means to have a psychologically safe environment. This refers to an individual's perception of the consequences of taking social risks for things like raising ideas, making mistakes and asking questions. No one wants to feel ignorant, incompetent, negative, or disruptive, however many organisations have cultures where the environment is not safe because this is exactly how they will feel if they are genuinely themselves and step outside of the social norms.

Bob Keagan says todays working environment needs to be a rich mix of challenge and support for people's 'further unfolding'. He goes on to say that currently organisations are WEAK on both of these things, especially the challenge part. So a HUGE amount of energy (it has been said around 60 – 70% especially in times of change) is poured into managing the perceptions of others, rather than investing in our self development, simply because the environment is not right.

Some ideas for creating this environment:

✓ Look at yourself for how you might contribute to a culture where it is not safe to explore

✓ Share the concept of psychological safety with teams

✓ Involve them in ideas for creating this environment

✓ Look out for instances when it is not safe and work through that

> *"To test if you are worrying too much about looking good, observe how you feel when you find out you've made a mistake or don't know something"*
> *Ray Dalio, Bridgewater*

In times of change, it has been said that we use 60-70% of our energy on perception management. Ray Dalio who was quoted saying the above, asks whether we are worried about how we look, or focused on the goal. The goal for an Extraordinary workplace is primarily to develop Extraordinary people. If this is the goal, of which success can only follow, then the environment must reflect that goal. If individuals were able to stop having to manage perceptions, and organisations had to stop paying for when that goes wrong, imagine the kinds of cultures we could create globally…

Develop organisation wide self awareness

Extraordinary Awareness is required throughout the whole organisation. Not just at the top. Again, in the organisations we have worked with, huge amounts of money have been invested in leadership coaching and development at the top and often times the intention is good. From a traditional model, there is an expectation that 'leaders' pave the way, inspire and motivate others toward a vision. The problem is, apart from not humanly being able to pull that off, it creates an expectation from everyone else that the leaders are indeed responsible for everything. When self awareness development is spread throughout the whole organisation, everyone becomes responsible for creating the environment that is needed.

Management is still required for strategy; leadership is needed to move people with that strategy; and everyone is responsible for their respective role outcomes. However, in the environment of self developing, rank doesn't have its usual privileges. Evolving and advancing human beings is the responsibility of all. And undoubtedly, there are going to people at all levels who will add incredible ideas and approaches to create that.

So what kind of development is required for everyone in the organisation to be on this path toward Extraordinary Awareness? Here are some of things we consider the core stuff!

100% accountability for ourselves

HUGE!!! When people take 100% accountability for themselves, they become resourceful, as opposed to relying on resources. Life starts falling into place at work, home and other areas of their lives

The freedom and happiness that accompanies self awareness

This is a massive part of what people need to know for them to feel a commitment to it. This absolutely effects who they are in their work and even shifting to this being their biggest life work helps them to open up in so many ways

The brain and how it works

Interestingly, I was a participant in a presentation given by GE at a mindfulness conference in Sydney. GE did an internal study comparing the difference in impact on people who either did a mindfulness study or learned about the brain. The general outcome of this study was that both groups benefited equally. When people understand their brains, it can reduce the effects of so many negative cognitive dysfunctions like overthinking, anxiety, stress, anger and so on

Learning from our emotions

We view emotions as action signals for growth. All of them. 'Negative' emotions are pointing us toward what we want just as much as 'positive' emotions are indicators of what we want. When we start to value emotions in the workplace, life changes for everyone

After years of working with leaders, at The Field we developed The Extraordinary Minds Program, which includes an online learning component around fundamental self awareness topics in the workplace (plus connection and thinking). This is so that everyone in the organisation has an opportunity to grow alongside his or her leaders and create a common language. This also provides them the opportunity to work on things with everyone going through the same learning process, giving them topics, activities and challenges to reflect on together.

Check out our Extraordinary Minds Brochure

Let your culture reflect a deeper purpose

In the early 2000s, I was a part of one of the best workplace cultures I have ever experienced. This was a cognitive behavioural safety business (heavy industry) that my husband (at the time!) started, and we all worked passionately to build it as it rapidly became an international company. It attracted some of the finest people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. We had an 'internal purpose' which trumped everything else. This internal purpose was to become the best version of ourselves. We had values (which we called 'frames of reference') which we focused on every time we came together as a team. These frames of reference included mutual respect, 'Model 2 communication', internal locus of control, hard work, fun etc… Our frame of reference guided how we treated each other and our clients. Because of this internal purpose, giving and receiving 'feedback' meant something. It was taking us toward something. And it felt like an investment we were all making toward each other's self awareness. Our external purpose was to keep our clients safe.

We have probably heard of organisations who are not aligned with who they say they are internally. It creates a cynical culture, and diluted products and services externally.

Chris Argyris said that there are 'espoused values' – the things we say we do, and 'theory in action' – what we actually do. Your organisation needs to have values that speak to what lies at the heart of what people actually want. People want to grow, to connect, to master themselves and their skills and they want what they do to mean something. They also want to see a direct correlation between decisions leaders make and your espoused values.

When working with a large organisation in Australia, despite how great the pay for employees was, and how comfortable their working environment, the underlying theme was a sense of quiet hostility. People were not consulted in decision making which created a whole lot of changes that made it more difficult for their employees to do their job. In the scope of our work, all we could do was educate why their culture was held back from being Extraordinary and to align leaders to operating in ways that are transparent, authentic and consultative. It is very hard to repair a lack of trust and respect when your organisation has thousands of people in it. The stories last much longer than attempts to change things.

If your values and behaviours organisationally do not call the people within it to aim for something bigger in themselves and in their work, then someone or some people need to be brave enough to change that. The unfolding of human potential and happiness IS the biggest work an organisation can be the catalyst for and it makes absolute business sense to do that.

> *"If you feel out of place in this world, it means it's time for you to bring more of yourself to it"*
>
> *K Lincolne*

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