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CREATING TEAMS * COACHING LEADERS

Leaders and The Four Fatal Fears

*“The only thing we have to
fear is fear itself.”*

This famous quote from Franklin Roosevelt speaks as clearly to leaders today as it did in the 1940s. In their book, *Play to Win*, Larry and Hersch Wilson present psychologist Maxie Maultsby’s concept of the Four Fatal Fears. Maultsby believes these fears impede our ability to interact effectively with others and take relevant action. These fears can not only immobilize us, but also immobilize an entire organization when a leader is stuck in their grip. Let’s take a look at the impact of these Four Fatal Fears on a leader’s ability to create a dynamic organization that responds quickly and effectively to change, create new and innovative solutions, and work toward a common vision.

I fear failure; therefore, I need to succeed.

When leaders operate from a fear of failure, they are often reluctant to act. They may procrastinate in making decisions and miss opportunities. It impedes their sense of adventure and playfulness, as well as their ability to take the risks necessary for innovation and growth. A fear of failure can manifest itself as a need to have every piece of available information before making a decision.

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Do You Interview and Hire the Most Qualified Person for Your Team?

Build a Workforce That Will Work Wonders

At the end of the interview, you should know all there is to know about a potential employee. Why then does it often seem as if an interviewee walks out of the office as an enigma? After all, you’re holding all of the cards. There’s no reason to feel blindsided, but you do.

An interview is your chance to get to know a potential hire and to understand those things about him or her that would best suit your business. But not everyone knows how to get the most out of an interview.

To maximize the helpful information you get from a potential worker, you must do each of three things. First, you must develop interview questions which will elicit answers that identify skills specific to the position for which you are hiring. Secondly, know *exactly which answers* you are looking for with each question asked. Finally, you need to have the courage to challenge the answers candidates give you, to make absolutely sure that you have the information from them that you want.

Being unprepared for an interview can prove disastrous down the line. The employer who does not properly prepare for an interview is the employer whose workplace is defined by high turnover, low morale, low productivity and frequent accidents.

Preparation is more than having good interview questions. If you are unprepared for the answers to those interview questions, you will still employ a good number of misfits. Well-developed questions without a plan to process the answers may eliminate the stupid and the slow, but the smooth talking low-producers will slip through those big holes in your screening process.

The good and prepared interviewer designs questions to identify specific skills and talents and looks for specific answers and the manner in which the applicant responds.

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Leaders who fear failure can become imaginatively stuck and in the constant mode of finding answers, rather than reframing questions. Their thinking can become polarized into black-and-white or all-or-nothing approaches that limit creativity and risk-taking.

I fear being wrong; therefore, I must be right.

For leaders, the fear of being wrong can make it extremely difficult to tolerate members of their management team who challenge their ideas or conclusions. Over time, dissenting voices become quiet and the management team becomes nothing more than a rubber stamp for the leader's thinking. The creativity and imagination of the team is lost to the leader and the business. Ultimately, leaders' fear of being wrong leads to an increased likelihood that they will be wrong. Leaders who need to be right tend to dominate discussions and attempt to control the thinking of others, rather than see others as resources that can expand their understanding of issues and opportunities.



I fear rejection; therefore, I need to be accepted.

Fear of rejection makes it difficult for leaders to take a stand and define themselves in situations where relationships feel endangered. Leaders who fear rejection seldom confront the poor performance of subordinates or challenge the thinking of others in a way that promotes lively discussion and debate. These leaders tend to rely exclusively on a consensus decision-making style because they believe it is more important to be liked than respected. Fearing rejection, leaders often try to present themselves in a way that is palatable to everyone, except them. This leads to stress, burnout and lack of confidence. More introverted leaders deal with the fear of rejection by pulling away from relationships and cutting themselves off from the very people with whom they desire connection.

I fear being emotionally uncomfortable; therefore, I need to be comfortable.

When leaders need emotional comfort, they lack the capacity to remain present and engaged when faced with resistance or anger from others. They tend to avoid emotionally charged discussions, and therefore, miss the opportunity for mutual learning and growth.

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The need to avoid emotional discomfort can make the intrinsic loneliness of leadership unbearable. Leaders who attempt to maintain constant emotional comfort become cut off from their own emotions and unable to respond appropriately to the emotions of others. It is almost impossible for leaders to make difficult decisions when they are paralyzed by the fear of others' emotional responses.



Summary

When leaders act out of fear, their actions and decisions are guarded and restrictive. These leaders tend to focus on controlling others, rather than managing themselves. The leaders' fears and anxieties are transmitted to their organizations, which creates dependency, indecisiveness and lack of personal responsibility. These shared fears can replace the firm's shared values and lead to ethical lapses, poor and untimely decisions, ineffective communication and dysfunctional relationships. To face and manage these fears, leaders must remain honest with themselves regarding their most prevalent fear and the conditions that are most likely to provoke that fear. Awareness is the first step to self-management, so here are some exercises to help you determine how fear has an impact on your leadership. Choose the exercise that you feel is most beneficial and revealing. Then, try it for a week and see how it adds clarity to your actions.

I fear failure; therefore, I must succeed.

For the next week, stop twice each day – once at midday and once at the end of the day – and ask yourself the following questions:

- What did I not attempt today because I was afraid I would fail?
- How did I rationalize not trying?
- What was the worst outcome that could have come out of my trying?
- What did not move forward because I did not try?
- What did I learn about myself and my leadership from this experience?

I fear being wrong; therefore, I need to be right.

For the next week, stop twice each day – once at midday and once at the end of the day – and ask yourself the following questions:

- In what situation did I feel the need to be right or to avoid being wrong?

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- How did I respond?
- How did other people respond to me?
- How could I have responded that would have been more useful?
- What did I learn about myself and my leadership from this experience?

I fear rejection; therefore, I need to be accepted.

For the next week, stop twice each day – once at midday and once at the end of the day – and ask yourself the following questions:

- In what situation did I feel rejected today?
- How did I respond?
- How could I have responded more effectively to stay connected?
- What situation did I avoid today because I was afraid of rejection?
- What was the result of my avoidance?
- How could I have engaged that person?
- What did I learn about myself and my leadership from this experience?

I fear being emotionally uncomfortable; therefore, I need to be comfortable.

For the next week, stop twice each day – once at midday and once at the end of the day – and ask yourself the following questions:

- What made me emotionally uncomfortable today?
- Why was I uncomfortable?
- What did I do to avoid or eliminate the discomfort?
- What did not get resolved because I avoided discomfort?
- What did I learn about myself and my leadership from this experience?

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The result is employment of better performers, lower turnover and higher morale.

What makes this interviewer so much more successful than the others is the quality of questions asked and the manner in which he or she processes the answers received. Behind every great workforce is a selection process that includes a well-developed interview process designed to ask questions that produce detailed information. The process also includes methods of challenging answers that allow qualified applicants to rise above those that merely talk a good game.



Develop interview questions to identify specific skills, and know what answers you are looking for from each question. Challenge answers to be sure you have the information you want. By consistently doing these three things, you will build a workforce that will work wonders.

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ONE MINUTE IDEAS

Literacy, Learning, & Improvement

People are the common denominator of progress. So no improvement is possible with unimproved people and advance is certain when people are liberated and educated. It would be wrong to dismiss the importance of roads, railroads, power plants, mills, and the other familiar furniture of economic development. But we are coming to realize that there is certain sterility in economic monuments that stand-alone in a sea of illiteracy. Conquest of illiteracy comes first.

John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (1958)

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Negotiating To Win

Often when we think of “negotiating to win” we visualize someone raising their hands triumphantly and the other party going away defeated. In sales negotiations, the objective is to have both sides win. Let’s face it; if there is a win for the selling organization and a loss for the customer, the selling organization will eventually lose. If there is a loss for the selling organization and win for the customer, the customer eventually loses. Therefore, the Champion Sales Person seeks to have a win/win scenario where both the selling organization and the customer win.

There are four negotiation alternatives that the Champion Sales Person can use to arrive at a win/win:

1. Trade-off – giving the customer something in exchange for something of comparable value.
2. Enhancement – giving the customer something that is of high value to them, but at low cost to the sales organization.
3. Split the difference – meeting the customer somewhere between the original proposal and the counter to the original proposal.
4. Concede – giving the customer what they are asking for, without getting anything in return



A win/win is most likely to result from using the trade-off alternative. As you go down the hierarchy of negotiation alternatives, the salesperson decreases the chances of developing a win/win scenario. Conceding should only be done on minor issues that are of low cost to the selling organization, in order to secure the business.

The Champion Sales Person plans each negotiation by developing several alternatives for each objection to be negotiated. Planning the negotiation using the negotiation alternatives above, will allow you to confidently face each sales engagement, and succeed in the goal of obtaining a win/win.

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