

Self-Examination as the New Job Requirement for Business Leaders

It has long been true that the supervisor has shifted the employee evaluation to include the employee's self-evaluation. However, in more recent times, self-evaluation has become a part of the CEO's job description as well. Business leaders have been wise to make this choice in order to lead (and thrive with) their organizations. The most progressive CEOs understand that their staff won't really tell them the total truth unless the CEO absolutely requires it; and that is not going to happen unless that business leader understands the power differential so well that s/he makes it safe enough for his or her most key staff to be that honest. Only by understanding their own impact on specific key relationships at work, can CEO's really make the most effective choices about how to improve their own leadership skills. Otherwise, they are shooting in the dark with their ears covered and their eyes closed. Try running an organization with your ears covered and your eyes closed. It's definitely the more painful route to go for all concerned, including yourself--not to mention the profitability and welfare of your company are at stake. Companies are successful by maintaining their "edge." Once that's gone, the company is on the road to its own demise.

Perhaps, however, you have been considering for sometime now how you want to execute this self-examination successfully. When you do it well, the process actually becomes the foundation of the most essen-

tial relationship-building that you do with your staff. You are raising your staff to an entirely new level of functioning for themselves. You are freeing them up of any baggage they might have with you (or any CEO-kind of figure from the past) and helping them break through their own glass ceilings of production and effectiveness.

There are two primary things that need to happen before you can accomplish this next level of insight for yourself and productivity with your management team. First and foremost, you'll need to provide a SPACE and a PROCESS that is SAFE. Second and equally important, you'll need a facilitator who is highly skilled in assisting you to learn HOW to receive and manage highly sensitive information AND who is highly skilled at helping your staff to be willing to take the risk of sharing their deeper thoughts with you. Like an excellent surgeon, a highly talented facilitator spends years training and developing the complex talent that is equipped to handle any situation that may arise. You AND your staff will need access to this level of expertise and private space with that facilitator to sort out and practice how you all can best relate thoughts and feelings about your working relationship that will be most respectful and yet also most honest ---so as not to be destructive to the relationship. **ONE CANNOT LEAD AND BE A PARTICIPANT IN THIS KIND OF PROCESS AT THE SAME TIME. IT SIMPLY**

DOESN'T WORK. This is why the vast majority of CEO's BELIEVE they have honest relationships with their executive management team, but they really DON'T. The most progressive CEO's understand they can't lead AND be a participant at the same time---AND they are, by themselves, unable to create the level of safe space and safe process needed to access this highly advanced level of productivity---expressly BECAUSE of that power differential.

It should be noted that this work is not for those weak of courage, weak of trust, or weak of heart---who are unwilling to make a serious commitment to improve all of the above. Because of the deep nature of the work, it can easily be taken overly personally when it's not guided professionally. There are plenty of potholes to avoid, but when done appropriately with a well-qualified facilitator, the rewards are ENORMOUS---personally, professionally, and with regard to organizational development and profitability. For most organizations, it makes the difference between being able to move with market needs or allowing the next crisis

to hit and then becoming mired in continual crisis management inside your organization.

In what direction does your company need to move and position itself to thrive in the current and next markets? How are you going to help your management team make the changes "inside their skin" necessary to transition into the next phase of your development plan? What action are you willing to take to move yourself to a next level to be able to lead your own staff there?

Facilitators who are most ethical and professional don't tell you how to run your company. They assist you to remove barriers so that YOU can run your company better. Take great care in which you choose. There is no licensing or "quality control" in the profession of "consulting"---and most "consultants" don't have the specific training to do THIS kind of work. You are handing over a truckload of trust--and probably a delicate situation to that facilitator. Make the right choice the first time.

Lori Keegan of Transition By Design, Inc., offers professional and personal strategies to individuals and organizations. Contact her for more information.

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