



leaders changing behaviours

Many top leaders got to where they are through being experts in their field and sheer stamina. Now the rules have changed and success depends on being a great people leader.

The autocratic, directional and controlling styles that used to ensure success are no longer sufficient. Increasingly, leaders are being asked (or forced) to make the shift from directional task-focused leadership to achieving results through people.

Demands of the job place leaders on a stress treadmill, with little time to step away from things and take stock. Just get the job done.

Common to many...

Mindset Matters Group (MMG) work with top leaders to create the shift from directional, task-focused leadership to achieving results through people.

MMG recently worked with a senior leader whose story is typical of leaders who have progressed through organisations based on solid technical expertise.

David grew up in the 50s and 60s, gained three degrees and diligently worked his way up the ladder. He had always been 'strong', never showing weakness by taking a sick day his entire working life. Sound familiar?

David's approach, though somewhat black and white, was highly effective. He had always been rewarded for being a great performer. "My personal response under stress was to just do it myself, and avoid the drama. I always avoided that 'people stuff' wherever possible."

So why change?

Connecting with ourselves

It is difficult for people to work effectively with others without first understanding themselves. "In one of my coaching sessions, I was suddenly asked a question I couldn't answer. 'What are your inner strengths?' I realised I'd never taken the time out to find out what I am all about".

David commented "Modern society drives us away from looking at ourselves. It drives us away from understanding the environment around us, how it influences us, and how we influence others. It discourages us to take the time to think."

The light bulb moment

"In my coaching the thing that grabbed me, that I'll never forget, was the 'point of choice' - inserting thought between stimulus and response, and choosing differently. Everything just fell into place for me. I now understand that with every decision we make, particularly in areas where we are unskilled or under stress, we will tend to default to our defensive behaviours. I can now recognise the warning signs of when I'm about to slip into defensive behaviour, and am able to choose to respond differently. I feel I'm master of my own destiny - not a victim."

Connecting with others

To lead effectively, leaders need to build the engagement of their people and create an environment where people feel supported, enabled and empowered to do their best.

“Before I had a good degree of understanding of emotional intelligence was; what I wasn’t doing was acting on it. I am now consciously tuning in and being genuinely interested in the needs of people. I now take up the opportunity to connect instead of brushing people aside or moving straight onto the task at hand.”

David absolutely gets why it’s beneficial to be constructive and now approaches his relationships with others in a completely different way. “It’s given me an improved confidence and effectiveness in dealing with people. I no longer avoid interpersonal issues. I find that invariably, when I need to confront people, by taking a constructive approach, I’m able to resolve the issue effectively.

Working with both hands

By working only through task, leaders are trapped in a cycle of micro-managing details, high stress, long hours and tense relationships that impact on both work and family life. “It’s like working with one hand tied behind your back.”

Being able to work through people increases your own personal effectiveness:

More gets done – leaders switch from doing to leading

New talent is created when leaders mentor, coach and encourage their people

People feel invigorated, engaged and enjoy coming to work

Strong relationships are built which circumvent silos and bureaucracy.

And the results

David received 360 feedback using the Human-Synergistics® Life Styles Inventory (LSI®) tool which measures other’s perceptions of leader’s behaviours. Initially David was shocked by his results (see the first circumplex in diagram opposite – blue shade denotes the degree of constructive leadership style experienced by others, while red and green denote defensive styles).

The coaching support David received enabled him to put things into perspective and approach his next steps in a positive way. “Liza (Spence from MMG) helped me see, all is not lost – I can take this feedback and use it to make some real changes”.

There is a profound simplicity in the concepts used in coaching that resonate with people. “Once I’d made the decision I wanted to change,

I had a clear model - I got what it was I needed to do differently.”

David’s LSI re-measure highlights the change – a significant increase in constructive (blue) styles and a decrease in defensive ways of working.

December 2004

Description by Others N = 4



Jan 2006

Description by Others N = 8



Understanding the Human-Synergistics® LSI® Tool (Life Styles Inventory)

The LSI tool identifies twelve ways of thinking and behaving that are classified as either constructive or defensive (red and green styles).

The constructive styles are ways of thinking and doing things that:

Are personally satisfying

Enrich and inspire others

About being the best we can be.

Constructive styles are correlated with increased personal effectiveness, happiness and lower stress. Research shows organisations with constructive cultures have substantially higher earnings and growth, motivated employees and satisfied customers.

Defensive ways of working can take two forms.

Passive Defensive:

‘Playing it safe’

Being limited by self-doubt

Decreased by developing trust in ourselves and others.

Aggressive Defensive is:

Going about things in a self-promoting way to gain status

Decreased by learning to consider the impact of our actions on other people.

The Life Styles Inventory® LSI I® and Human Synergistics® are registered trademarks of Human Synergistics (NZ), and Human Synergistics International.

