

Career Women Becoming Fearless Podcast
The 1 Leadership Behavior You Need

Hello everyone! So happy to have you here for this week's episode. After this last week and the stress of the election I'm sure you're happy to get back to your routine. I had many sleepless nights for sure!

Prior to my coaching practice I was a leader of talent & development in the pharmaceutical/biotechnology industry. As part of this role, I developed people managers, led our inclusion strategy, was a performance coach, and really owned all things people development. In 2018 I earned a master's in organizational psychology and my thesis work studied employee engagement, psychological safety in employees, and how leaders could create high performers during times of change. What is the type of environment necessary for employees to be the most engaged and perform at the highest level. I studied 30 years of research in trust, psychological safety, engagement, leadership, and organization change.

This was so applicable to my leadership role in Corporate but also very relevant to my coaching practice. I work with a lot of people managers or aspiring people managers. You could say I'm really passionate about helping women achieve their goals and see what is possible for them.

Today I'm going to share some of the research I studied and the 6-step model I created when I was in graduate school. You're going to be able to use this information to know how to navigate change and more importantly why these efforts don't work and often leave you frustrated so you can make the improvements or spark a conversation with your manager. If you're a manager, you'll learn how to foster the environment needed to have a high performing

team and create engaged employees who aren't looking around the corner for the next best opportunity. I'm going to tell you the 1 leadership behavior organizations needs to help you be successful as an employee or manager.

It's worth noting that a requirement for my research on this is that it is not only peer reviewed by an Organizational Psychologist, at the doctorate level, but that the content includes new insights and advice for leaders that is not published anywhere else. So, you're in for a treat and I'm so excited to share this with you.

When I worked in pharma/biotech we were under constant change, whether it be culture initiatives, restructuring of departments, new products or pipeline adjustments, it was the one thing you could count on.

This is true of many organizations; most Organizations are in a constant state of change and turbulence to adapt to increasing competition. Everyone wants to be the preferred supplier for whatever product or service they are providing. It makes sense but what many companies fail to consider is really the impact that change has on people, on their employees. The managers or leaders that make these decisions don't always do the best job of really understanding how the change will impact employees but also aren't informed of the psychology behind change and that you can't just logic your way into things 😊.

To successfully navigate a complex and dynamic market, organizations have to be proactive about managing change at a process level but also a human level. For organizations to survive they need to address the whole organization and not just make changes at the structural level or strategy or concept level, but they need to be inclusive of the employee population, their perceptions and their needs. This is an area that a lot of companies are really lacking. Even the

most skilled change management gurus focused on more communication plans and gannt charts than the human element of change. I'm sure you've experienced this at least once if not regularly.

According to the Journal of Management and Change, Understanding the behaviors and psychology behind how people respond to change can enable organizations to minimize the negative impact to the person and organization. But this goes deeper than the typical change management many leaders are educated on. We can agree that leaders are a critical element to your success and your performance at work. Anyone who has had an awful boss, or an amazing boss can attest to that. Even the highest of achievers struggle when their boss isn't really up to par. So, I'm going to provide some guidance for leaders too so that you can understand how to prevent performance issues when going through change.

When we talk about change management, we often hear a connection to employee engagement. How engaged are employees as we go through this change? Most companies measure this by culture surveys, attrition, and feedback provided during town halls and 1-1 meetings. Why is this important?

It is well established that organizations benefit from an engaged workforce by improved performance, commitment, dedication to organizational values and behaviors, reduced safety incidents, and improved gains in profitability and customer satisfaction. Sounds good right? So, leaders know that they want employees to be engaged because employees are the heart of the organization, they are doing the work, helping to make the profits, and keeping them in business.

Now how companies measure this can be skewed – because the types of questions employers use aren't really connected to engagement from a psychology perspective – with

questions like, would you recommend this company as a great place to work don't get to the heart of what engagement really is.

When an employee is fully engaged they are taking a risk because they are acting with authenticity and speaking up, despite the potential for negative consequences. What is interesting here is in order for employees to be engaged by this definition, they have to feel psychologically safe. This is a term you may have heard, it is becoming more popular and is the foundation of Amy Edmondson's work – she is a Harvard Business School Professor and researcher. A simple definition of psychological safety is that it is a belief that you will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.

Are you with me?

Organizations want engaged employees, but don't all understand that in order for you to be engaged, you need to feel psychologically safe. Once you're psychologically safe, you are engaged (i.e. high performance and commitment, dedication/loyalty to company, and the organization gets the return). Once you're engaged, you will speak up which is what is necessary to effective change. You're needed to speak up to improve processes, report issues, etc.

Leaders are disconnected from how this all works together and so you end up with disengaged employees, and well-intended cultural initiatives on engagement, speaking up, etc. but not seeing they aren't in silos, they all build on each other. I hope this is starting to connect for you, so you can see your organization differently and better understand what you need to achieve your career goals but also if you're a leader – that you'll be able to better manage change and employees so that it is win-win all around. Now let's get deeper on psychological safety.

I established so far psychological safety is needed for engagement and comfort for employees to speak up authentically and without fear.

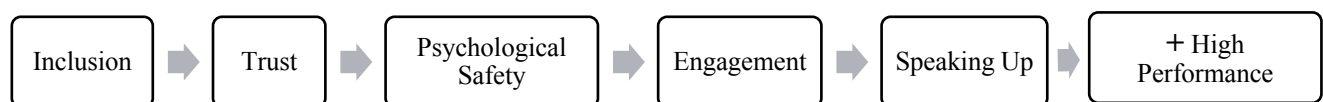
Psychological safety creates a culture of individuals who feel connected to their work, to their teams, feel loyalty to their organization and therefore feel invested in its success. The organization's investment in the employee relationship is what enables employees to speak up, the critical skill needed for change to be effective, to have a culture of continuous improvement, reduce errors, and lead to high performance.

In my corporate experience, I focused heavily on how to improve the relationships between employees but most importantly between the leader and the employees. This is critical.

To build and sustain psychological safety the employee must have a sense of trust. Feeling enough trust to rely on team members, that your manager has your best interest and that you can succeed and fail without negative consequences.

So here is where the research gets more interesting. So, trust is needed for psychological safety and what I concluded from my research over the past 30 years on these topics is that inclusion is the first step in trust. The analysis of the literature supports that leaders can create trust through inclusive behaviors. Leader inclusive behaviors is where the path to high performance begins. So, you see it is all connected.

I created a model in my thesis that shows the progression from inclusion to ultimately an increase in performance through developing trust, psychological safety, engagement, and speaking up.



It all starts with inclusion. You can't have trust, psychological safety, engagement, speaking up behavior or high performance without inclusion.

So, what is inclusion? Inclusion can be defined as a culture where all employees in the organization, regardless of background, mindset, and position, work effectively together to accomplish the organization's objectives.

So, think about this as an employee. Think about the various culture initiatives your company initiates. Think about what you think when your leader asks you to "speak up" or tries to measure your engagement. Think about how performance is measured at your company. Companies want you to be a high performer and deliver at the highest level. You likely want to be a high performer and believe you are. So, what this research tells you is that there is a reason you feel challenged or struggle, there is a reason people don't speak up, there is a reason some of these well-intended cultural initiatives fall flat. They aren't working together.

Companies will have inclusion strategies that include speaking up but think about the model I created based on the research. Inclusion is first. Speaking up is last right before high performance is realized. You need trust, psychological safety, and engagement in the middle. It's like reading the first and last chapter of a book and skipping the middle where you get to know the characters and the plot and the detail you need to know to understand how the story got to the end.

You can't skip these parts. Your company likely has this out of order and is more jumping from inclusion to speaking up to engagement but that isn't how our brains work that isn't what the decades of scientific research prove. Leaders scratch their heads and wonder why

there isn't higher engagement and I can tell you from my experience in corporate and as a coach, employees are frustrated too.

So, what can be done. You can use this information and the model that I created in your organization so your cultural initiatives can be more effective. What is really cool is that leadership behaviors can definitely foster a culture of inclusion and create the trust necessary.

The relationship the employee has with their manager heavily influences the employee readiness for change and commitment to performance. Higher level leaders in the organization also influence the employee's readiness and commitment to the change effort. I'm sure you've had the experience of a charismatic inspirational leader and one that leads more with a stick and punitive consequences.

There are 2 leadership styles I suggest when trying to build this culture of high performance and navigate change successfully. Transformational and Servant Leadership.

Transformational and servant leadership empowers the employee, focuses on employee development, support, coaching, and communication. These leadership behaviors promote a sense of inclusion which mediates trust and leads to psychological safety and ultimately high performance. An organization with a high presence of servant leaders may have the foundation to stop performance disruptions in times of change.

Do you think you have a lot of servant leaders in your organization? Are you a servant leader? Many development programs allow managers to choose what style they prefer, and some are more effective than others. What I encourage is that you talk to your manager about the style of leadership that works well for you.

Transformational leadership is strongly supported to effectively navigate employees through times of organizational change. Transformational leadership behaviors are consistent with servant leadership but are focused on the vision for change and can be temporary. A transformational leader increases communication, support, and relational commonalities during times of change, which illicit inclusion and trust feelings in the employee, the antecedents of high performance.

The difference in Transformational and Servant is Servant is how leaders can behave as business as usual, transformational is like a break the glass style you initiate when you are undergoing a change. It focuses on creating a vision for employees, helping them see the need for the change but it also incorporates the elements of servant leadership. A feeling of psychological safety can be tested during times of change and therefore I suggest that leaders adjust their servant style to a transformational leadership style during the change management process to provide the reassurance and support necessary to reinforce the behaviors necessary for successful planned change.

These leadership styles are inclusive, they are collaborative and supportive. They can be the foundation for building the behavior of being inclusive – the one behavior you need as a leader (regardless of title)

There are a lot of resources online and books on these styles you can pick up if you want to learn more.

Change is going to happen, it is necessary.

When change occurs, people react with and without intention and their responses can be unpredictable. It's why typical change management doesn't work. Like I said earlier, it doesn't address the human element, the psychology of change. When you're confronted with change, there's a sense of loss and grief, there's a disruption to what you knew was true, you're going to have some thoughts and feelings about that. Organizations need to understand that. Therefore, leaders should be intentional in their change management approach. It's not like dominoes where a manager decides the organization will change and the employees perfectly fall in line.

There is one thing I want to add here - The lens employees use to see the organization can change. It is important to recognize that a state of inclusion, feeling of trust, psychological safety, and engagement are not stagnant. You cannot take them for granted.

I'm sure you've had times in your career, with your same company, or even this year alone where your engagement, trust, or sense of inclusion shifted. So, there isn't an end point. There isn't a once we achieve a certain percentage on a survey or have a successful change initiative the work is done.

Leaders cannot implement a series of steps to create these feelings and expect they will not change over time. An employee is a human whose emotions and state of mind is fluid. The employee's personal and professional experiences can influence their feelings and connection to their work. Therefore, it is imperative that reaction to change be proactively monitored throughout the change process.

A key learning here is when an organization is attempting to either be proactive in sustaining high performance or reacting to negative dips in performance, the organization should

start with inclusion. My conclusion from the research is Leader inclusiveness is the pathway to a high performing organization.

If you focus your efforts on inclusive leadership, which servant leadership is the heart of, you will be more successful as a leader and so will your employees.

Alright friends that is it for today's episode. This one was jam packed. If you want to learn more about this topic or discuss how coaching can help you achieve your goals, regardless of your environment or culture, I invite you to apply for coaching. We start with a complementary call to discuss your goals and determine if coaching is a good fit. You can apply at www.melissamlawrence.com. I'll put a link in the show notes.

Have a great week.