HOW TO BE A
POSITIVE LEADER

Insights from Leading Thinkers on Positive Organizations

Small Actions, Big Impact

Edited by Jane E. Dutton and Gretchen M. Spreitzer

Foreword by Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage*

More Praise for *How to Be a Positive Leader*

"Profound, practical, inspirational. Written by the most-respected thought leaders in positive organizational scholarship, the chapter-by-chapter evidence-based recommendations provide a compelling case for immediate practical application. This is a must-read for leaders who wish to broaden and deepen the positive impact they can have on organizations."

—Jim Loehr, cofounder and Vice President, Human Performance Institute

"We need many more positive leaders in our society and in business. Positive leaders create possibility for others. They help us do the right thing and enable us to lead more extraordinary lives. This book is filled with practical advice about how you can become a positive leader. Bravo!"

—R. Edward Freeman, University Professor, Darden School of Business, University of Virginia

"This insightful and actionable book beautifully articulates a very relevant and timely set of positive leadership principles. The arrangement of the tools in 'bite-size' segments is the perfect format for any leader to present."

—Fred Keller, Chairman and CEO, Cascade Engineering

"Every chapter I read struck a chord and made me rethink an element of my own leadership. This book beautifully combines inspirational ideas with high quality evidence. It is thoughtful, insightful, and brimming with fresh approaches."

—Sharon Parker, Winthrop Professor, UWA Business School, University of Western Australia

"Thirteen insightful essays and about 800 good ideas one can implement for immediate improvement. You'd have to be wildly negative in your worldview not to walk away from reading this book with a wealth of tangible, doable action steps to take your leadership and your organization's work performance to the next level."

—Ari Weinzweig, Cofounding Partner, Zingerman's Community of Businesses

"Every leader and aspiring leader from all sectors of society should enjoy, learn, and be inspired by this practical and highly engaging new volume. Don't miss this opportunity to learn how to dramatically improve your leadership skills and make a larger positive impact throughout your career."

—Stewart I. Donaldson, Dean and Professor of Psychology, Claremont Graduate University

"The Center for Positive Organizations is a treasure trove of people and knowledge. Now we have the map to their treasure. *How to Be a Positive Leader* gives us a practical path to become better, positive, inspirational leaders."

—Rich Sheridan, CEO, Menlo Innovations LLC

"Jane Dutton and Gretchen Spreitzer have gathered a sterling group of thought leaders to describe what it takes to become a positive leader. Thought-provoking and provocative, it shows the day-to-day actions leaders can take right now to improve the quality of relationships, build the capacity for collaboration, and unlock the resources of innovation. A must-read for any practicing leader or those destined to follow the extraordinary trajectory to positive leadership."
   —**Lynda Gratton, Professor of Management Practice, London Business School**

"Jane Dutton and Gretchen Spreitzer have tapped the greatest minds to provide a one-stop resource for leaders who want to create and maintain a meaningful, purposeful, and positive workplace. The leadership tools and experiences discussed play to the desires of leaders to inspire themselves and others; promote excellence, virtuousness, and high quality connections; and reward positive deviance in the workplace to bring about exponential positive change."
   —**Roger Newton, founder, Executive Chairman, and Chief Scientific Officer, Esperion Therapeutics, Inc.**

"As Gallup polls proclaim that seven in ten American workers are disengaged, this book provides a recipe for change. Simultaneously theoretically rigorous and action oriented, the authors offer concrete actions to recreate yourself and spur others to thrive. As leaders seek to move their organizations to higher levels of excellence, this book provides simple but powerful tools to improve relationships and excitement about the future."
   —**Deborah Ancona, Seley Distinguished Professor of Management and Faculty Director, MIT Leadership Center, MIT Sloan School of Management**

"The book offers distilled and accessible wisdom from many years of solid research. It is a tour de force of positive leadership, written with a deep sense of humanity and providing a plethora of concrete practices to make an impact."
   —**Arne Carlsen, Associate Professor, BI Norwegian Business School**

"'What do I *do*?' That's the biggest question we hear from leaders who want to create positive organizations. This book is the answer. It gives you specific actions, inspiring examples, and even tweets. Apply this book and you will be a positive leader."
   —**Wayne Baker, Professor of Management and Organizations, University of Michigan, and author of *United America***

"Positive organization studies is a burgeoning field of evidence-based management that, enacted in everyday organizational life, makes a real difference. Organizational dysfunctions need remedies, and many can be found in the wisdom assembled in these chapters."
   —**Stewart Clegg, Professor, University of Technology, Sydney**

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SMALL ACTIONS, BIG IMPACT

JANE E. DUTTON and
GRETCHEN M. SPREITZER

BK®

How to Be a Positive Leader

To leaders past, present, and future
who call forth the best in people
and in work organizations.

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Foreword

Shawn Achor

author of *The Happiness Advantage*
and *Before Happiness*

In one of my earliest attempts to bring leadership research into companies, I was invited to Zurich by a large Swiss bank during the economic crisis to give a lecture on Positive Leadership in Uncertain Times. Instead of reading my short bio, a disgruntled senior leader, who had been forced by the Human Resources (HR) Department to introduce my session, came to the front of the room and said, "Hello. As you know, we don't have bonuses for everyone, but here is a talk on happiness . . . from a guy from America."

You can imagine the response. There was immediate nonverbal stonewalling from these cool, reserved Swiss bankers. Honestly, I was already nervous for this talk. I was a green, thirty-year-old researcher with massive educational debts about to lecture on leadership to ultra-wealthy, battle-hardened, fifty-year-old managing directors at one of the world's largest banks. But what happened next was a significant learning moment for me.

About ten minutes into the talk, as I transitioned to explaining the scientific research that had been done on how to create rational optimism and to deepen social support in the midst of crisis, the senior leaders imperceptibly began leaning forward.

Slowly, many began quietly picking up pens and inconspicuously looking for notepads. By the break, ninety minutes into the session, I could not even get to the coffee machine to try one of their fancy espressos because the leaders were flooding me with questions about research that could apply to their team's specific problems. When I finished the three-hour session, I was told by the global head of HR that I would be visiting all of their banking centers in Asia, Europe, and the United States during the banking crisis.

What happened? This book is what happened. The engaged response in Zurich was not about me, it was about the power of positive organizational scholarship. Those Swiss bankers were willing to listen because they respected the rigor with which those researched findings were sought, and they could see the leadership value of those conclusions. Scientifically validated research and focused study of thriving leaders and organizations are the keys to opening minds to real and quantifiable positive change. Without them, we are left with vague motivational statements and a risky reliance on faith in the lecturer rather than in the concepts.

If we want to change the way that organizations work, we need to learn deeply, embrace fully, and communicate effectively this positive research.

Research, of course, is not without error; it is intentionally organic, responding to new findings and rejecting mistaken ones. You will see in this book that these brilliant scholars wrestle with the ideas of their predecessors and contemporaries. But with research comes the ability to extend beyond a single person's ideas to an entire latticework of intrepid scholars seeking to cancel the noise and to find the signal.

It is my belief that there are two major impediments to change. Either we do not know how to change, or we do not

believe change is possible. In this book, we attempt to remove these obstacles by helping individuals overcome both mental and physical barriers to change.

Warning: this is not a normal book. Most books do not need instructions; this one does. Most books neatly lay out one or two ideas, all with the same style and structure, and then pound it home. This book is different. The academic scholars who have contributed to this book hail from various universities throughout the nation, and they focus on their own individual topics. If the goal is to get the best information all at once, in truth, no one person could write this book. The collected nature of this book allows you to go directly to the sources of the research to learn how best to use the findings. Perhaps this approach is comparable to the difference between eating boiled, buttered vegetables—where some of the nutrition is cooked out to make it easy to swallow—and eating raw vegetables. This book is more raw than the average reader might be used to, but perhaps the ideas have a greater potential to create positive change.

So I would suggest reading this book as if you were going through an incredible semester of classes taught by rock-star professors. Note well that they all have different styles, just like your favorite professors did in college. Remember that in some classes, you needed to take diligent notes. In others, you needed to scan quickly for the answers you knew would be asked later. In some, you just need to let the information flow over you and hope to absorb genius by osmosis. The key is to take what you can and to apply it immediately. This research is useless unless it is lived. Do not let this book languish on your shelf. Pull the things you need from this text and champion its overarching conclusions: *your behavior matters, and the more positively you lead, the more successful and happy your organization, family, and community will become.*

I am excited by this book, as you can probably tell; these scholars are at the vanguard of their field. Just think about a leader you know at an organization right now who is faced with a challenge. Maybe they want to know how to respond positively to a disengaged team at a call center, or how to help a hospital deal with changes to regulations, or how to overcome culture chasms between two newly merged airlines. It would be incredible for that person to have an entire brain trust of whip-smart individuals who would spend every waking hour for a decade thinking, discussing, writing, and researching about that very question. You are holding that brain trust. And after reading and digesting this book fully, you will become that brain trust for your organization. For you are what you read.

Since that learning moment in Zurich, I have had the privilege of lecturing in fifty countries and at over a third of the Fortune 100, and I have noticed something interesting. Every company explains to me how they are going through unheardof change, stress, and workload that differentiates them from every other company or industry. The uniqueness of their situation cannot be the case. And change, stress, and workload are integral parts of work in the modern world; we should not be surprised to find them there.

What I believe *is* different is this: we have reached a unique time where we can no longer increase working hours and workloads expecting to maximize productivity. We have tripped over the top of the time-management curve and now find the old way of leading, that is, "work harder, longer, and faster," is causing us to work slower, shorter, and more unhappily. We are seeing some of the greatest rates of job dissatisfaction in the history of polling, and younger generations are demanding a change. By immersing yourself in the research in this book,

you can help your organization to navigate to a different place by using a different leadership formula. As I wrote in *Before Happiness*, "the greatest competitive advantage in the modern economy is a positive and engaged brain." This book is the research basis for how we can get our brains and organizations to move toward both "positive" and "engaged."

Many of the things that fill the pages of this book could be derived from common sense. But common sense is not common action. Companies and leaders that heed this information will be leading flourishing businesses of the future. A tectonic plate shift is occurring in the nature of how we conceive of work, and those that attempt to reinvent the wheel or do business as usual without a focused, research-based approach to leadership will suffer the fate of the quite fearsome but also quite extinct *T. rex*.

In conclusion, we need you. You are the final ingredient. We need more people finding ways to make this research come alive and to take it beyond the walls of academia into a world that could desperately use it. Information alone will not cause transformation. Sometimes in life, we just do things and they manage to work out. But if you want to truly sustain positive change, you have to understand how to create it well enough to replicate it and to teach it to others.

We hope this book fuels you as you bring this research to life.

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Invitation

*Jane E. Dutton and
Gretchen M. Spreitzer*

Some leaders have developed a special set of capabilities, captured in their ability to see possibilities for greatness in people and their team. Other leaders know that small actions can have tremendous impact. We have become believers in both abilities: the power of seeing possibilities and the awareness that small actions can have great impacts for bringing out the best in people and their organizations.

We did not come to this conclusion easily. We have struggled together with our students of all ages as they experience the limits of applying traditional models of leadership in their own lives. Most of us live in systems with scarce resources, where we increasingly must do more with less. Sometimes we lack courage and settle for results that are just "good enough." Over time, fueled by the hope for something more—some oxygen for action—we started exploring new pathways for seeing how leaders could make a difference. We became inspired to write this book to collect and to apply some of the best wisdom available on bringing out the best in people and work organizations. If your job affords opportunities to bring out the best in people at work, then this book is for you. Even if your job does not directly afford you these opportunities, but

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you care deeply about this goal, this book is for you. Although grounded in strong scholarship and the latest research, we've written this book for you, the leader, not for the researcher.

We have witnessed firsthand the changes made possible when leaders see, know, and act in ways that bring out the best in people and organizations. During the past decade, we have built the Center for Positive Organizations, devoted to understanding how small changes in leaders' actions, particularly if part of "normal practice" in organizations, can be a powerful path toward sustained excellence. Important indicators that an organization and people within it are on this path include meaningful and measurable changes toward increasing greatness. These indicators may be greater task and financial performance, increased thriving and engagement at work, more creativity, greater resilience, and greater overall well-being of individuals and the organization.

A positive leader expects that capacities for excellence can always be expanded. In graphical terms, a positive leader believes in enlarging the zone of possibility for excellence, where today's small actions can change the amount of capacity for excellence inherent in a person or collective over time (see Figure 1). As the figure suggests, "normal" leaders work along the normal path of improving their own or their organization's capacity for excellence. A positive leader believes it is possible to shift the rate and level at which one's own or the organization's capacity for excellence can improve, moving from a normal improvement rate to a more extraordinary improvement rate. The perspectives shared in this book can lift up and accelerate the rate of improvement, increasing the capacity for excellence in significant ways. Expanding the zone of possibility requires new ways of thinking and acting, which are at the heart of positive leadership. *How to Be a Positive Leader* offers a
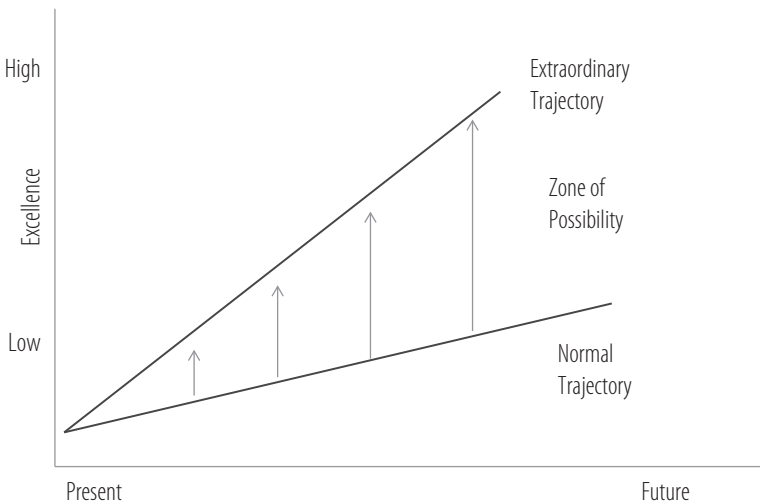
FIGURE 1 Positive leaders increase capacities for excellence.

compelling set of evidence-based perspectives and practices that leaders can embrace, expanding the possibilities for excellence by tapping into the best in people and organizations.

Three features of *How to Be a Positive Leader* are distinctive. First, the book takes the perspective that small actions by leaders can and do have big impact. The authors identify small actions that make a big difference in the potential for enlarging capacities for positive impact. Second, the book uses a dual lens, focusing on what leaders can do to expand their *own* capacities for excellence while they seed directives for sustaining the capacities for excellence through more organizational-level actions. Third, the book is inspirational. It invites leaders to see the possibilities for expanded and improved human capacities enabled by small actions.

Who Is This Book For?

We do not assume that you or other leaders require formal power to be positive leaders. In fact, we believe that leaders, inside and outside of formal organizational roles, have the power to change trajectories of excellence in organizations. They can unlock resources, foster positive relationships, tap into the good, and engage generative change. This book is written for anyone with aspirations to become a more positive leader: anyone who seeks to increase capacities for excellence. It offers important lessons for senior leaders in a corporation, middle managers, directors of a nonprofit, entrepreneurs, or individual contributors. Many of these lessons apply not only to the world of work but also to family and social life, as well as to involvement in community, civic, and volunteer activities.

Why This Book Now?

This book could not come at a better time because leaders—and all people in organizations—are being asked to do more with less. It is also a time when too many employees and leaders are less than fully engaged and not fully developing their potential. Against the backdrop of the squeeze for greater performance and languishing work engagement, leaders need new visions and new actions for how to increase individual and organizational capacities for excellence. The purpose of this book is to ignite and to inspire new possibilities for action as a positive leader.

Who Is Offering Insights?

We have assembled some of the most respected thought leaders in the vibrant field of positive organizational scholarship (POS) to offer their best evidence-based recommendations. They discuss how to be a positive leader, that is, how to bring out the best in themselves as leaders as well as in organizations. POS is the intellectual discipline behind the research grounding these chapters. We invited each scholar to identify and make the case for positive leadership using a "seed idea," which is a core action-based idea that expands possibilities for excellence in individuals or organizations. We use the image of a seed to emphasize that leadership actions can start out small but expand and grow capacities inside people and organizations. Each author also offers strategies for germinating the seed idea in organizations, along with examples of positive leaders in action. Together, the chapters provide a compelling mandate and enriched portfolio for positive leaders who wish to have big impact.

Four clusters of positive leader strategies form the structure of the book. The first cluster covers positive relationships as the keystone for positive leadership. Jane E. Dutton describes the power and strategies for building high-quality connections, Adam M. Grant advocates outsourcing inspiration through connecting people to their impact on others, and Shirli Kopelman and Ramaswami Mahalingam illuminate how to negotiate mindfully.

The second cluster focuses on ways positive leaders can unlock resources from within people, within relationships, and within teams by activating and expanding key renewable resources such as energy, initiative, optimism, meaning, and creative thinking. Three chapters address this approach to

positive leadership: Gretchen M. Spreitzer and Christine Porath detail how to enable thriving at work, Laura Morgan Roberts describes how to cultivate positive identities, and Amy Wrzesniewski illuminates the power and practices of job crafting.

The third cluster focuses on how to lead positively by tapping into the good in people and in collectives. These chapters examine how leaders can foster the best of the human condition for individuals and for organizations as a whole. Kim Cameron explains how to activate virtuousness, David M. Mayer describes how to lead an ethical organization, and Robert E. Quinn and Anjan V. Thakor articulate how to create organizations of higher purpose.

A final cluster envisions positive leaders as change makers and unpacks how to think and act in ways that generate resourceful change. Resourceful change implies that leaders build strength and capability while they foster change. Oana Branzei articulates how to cultivate hope, Karen Golden-Biddle describes how to create micro-moves that engage people in change, Scott Sonenshein makes the case for how to foster resourcefulness during change, and Lynn Perry Wooten and Erika Hayes James focus on how to learn from crises.

Each chapter explains why the specific leadership approach produces positive impact by drawing on the most compelling research evidence. The chapters describe what leaders can do to make their leadership approach a reality for themselves and how to put the approach into practice within a work organization. Each chapter concludes with an example that documents how a specific leader or organization deployed this positive leadership approach. These examples capture a range of leader types, such as founders, senior leaders, and middle managers, from a variety of industries, such as health care and retail, and

market conditions ranging from fast growth to decline. This book ignites possibilities for bringing out the best in work organizations and broadens any positive leader's repertoire of actions to create enduring and beneficial impacts.

We invite you to share this journey on the road to becoming a positive leader. We hope the ideas and practices shared will be a kind of oxygen for action for you to see how small actions can have big impact for you and your organization.

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FOSTER POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are a source of strength and connection, as well as a means by which a leader's work gets done. In this section, our contributors invite you to attend to the quality of the relationships you form and the means by which you form them as important levers for increasing your own capability for excellence and the capabilities of others. This section opens up possibilities for uplifts in motivation, engagement, and meaning for you and for others by creating relationships between people and the beneficiaries of their work. Finally, this section zooms in on interrelating in negotiation and guides you in how to work mindfully and productively with your emotions to create win-win outcomes. This section reveals a rich array of means by which fostering positive relationships for you and for others can boost capacities for excellence.

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Build High-Quality Connections

Jane E. Dutton

Think of the last time an interaction at work literally lit you up. Before the interaction, you may have felt depleted, tired, or simply neutral. After the interaction, even if it was brief, you had greater energy and capability for action. This sense of heightened energy is real, and it is an important indicator that you are engaged in a high-quality connection (HQC). Other signs include a sense of mutuality and positive regard. In HQCs, people feel attuned to one another and experience a sense of worth and value. HQCs are critical building blocks for bringing out the best in people and organizations. The seed for this chapter is that leaders can bring out the best in themselves and others by building more high-quality connections at work. They also can design and implement practices, structures, and cultures fostering high-quality connection building throughout the organization and beyond.

The Value of High-Quality Connections

High-quality connections contribute to individual flourishing and to team and organizational effectiveness. These forms of connecting call forth positive emotions that are literally

life-giving. Barbara Fredrickson, who studies the power of positive emotions in connection, suggests these moments of connection start people on an upward spiral of growth and fulfillment.[1] For leaders, tapping into the power of high-quality connections means taking seriously the evidence that this form of person-to-person interrelating is at the root of critical individual and collective capabilities. The following are just some of the benefits of high-quality connections:

1. People who have HQCs are physically and psychologically healthier.[2]
2. Higher-quality connections enhance a person's physiological resources.[3]
3. People in higher-quality connections tend to have greater cognitive functioning.[4] High-quality connections also broaden people's capacities for thinking.[5]
4. People in higher-quality connections are better at knowing who to trust—and who not to trust.
5. When people are in HQCs at work, they tend to exhibit more learning behaviors.[6]
6. When people are in higher-quality connections at work and when top management teams have greater-quality connections between them, they tend to be more resilient (i.e., bouncing back from setbacks more effectively).[7]
7. When people are in HQCs at work, they tend to be more committed and more involved, and they display more organizational citizenship behaviors.[8]
8. When people are in higher-quality connections at work and teams have higher-quality connections, individuals and team members are more creative.[9]
9. At the organizational level, more HQCs enable greater overall employee commitment and engagement at work.[10]

10. At the organizational level, more higher-quality connections enable relational coordination, marked by shared knowledge, shared goals, and mutual respect, which is associated with greater organizational effectiveness in terms of greater efficiency and higher-quality performance.[11]

The beauty of high-quality connections is that they do not require significant time to build because they can be created in the moment. Meaningful investments of time and attention can further strengthen quality.

Strategies for Building High-Quality Connections

As a leader who wishes to ignite the best in yourself and in others, you have a range of potent options for building more HQCs with others and for designing organizations fostering this form of interconnecting.[12] We begin with your own interpersonal possibilities and invite you to consider four distinct pathways, or types of actions, to make workplace interactions more likely to yield high-quality connections.

Pathway 1: Respectfully Engage Others

Small acts matter in conferring worth to another person. Respect, or honoring another person's existence or value, is a state that is created in interaction with other people. Respect is not something we can grant ourselves; rather, it is a quality of experienced valuing from another person coming from subtle or direct messages of appreciation and worth. Respectfully engaging another person is accomplished through behaviors that signal that one person exists and is important in the eyes of another. There are at least three different moves that leaders

can engage in to respectfully engage others and to foster the building of HQCs.

One of the most potent ways is through presence, or psychologically and/or physically being attentive to another person's existence. Conveying presence takes effort for leaders, as hectic schedules, technological demands, and physical demands are just some of the barriers to communicating to another person they possess significance and value. Conveying presence means showing up bodily for another person, whether in someone's physical or virtual presence. Our bodies provide rich and revealing displays, signaling whether we are present— or absent. We explicitly remind others with our displays to stay attuned to and to be with another person. For example, turning off one's phone or physically moving away from the computer can be potent signals that one is ready, present, and receptive to connection with another person.

Respectful engagement also happens through effective listening and communicating supportively. If leaders can engage these two critical aspects of respectful engagement, high-quality connections result. Effective listening requires both empathy and active engagement. Empathy implies being tuned into what another person is saying so that one can imagine what the other person is feeling and meaning. Being an active listener means being genuinely responsive to the person who is speaking through moves such as paraphrasing or summarizing what another person is saying, asking questions, or soliciting feedback.[13] Supportive communication is a quality of communication that involves attending both to what is said and to how it is said in ways that provide direct, descriptive, and actionable information that another person can hear and use.[14] Supportive communication involves making requests and not demands,[15] which invites a form of engagement that

is voluntary and receptive, leading to a higher quality connection.

Pathway 2: Task-Enable Others

At the heart of task enabling is the core idea that higher-quality connections form if we facilitate another's success or performance on a task or a goal. When we task-enable others, they sense our interpersonal investment and desire to help, which opens them to an HQC. Of all the options for building high-quality connections, task enabling is often the method most explicitly recognized by work organizations. For example, when organizations assign mentors or coaches to facilitate another person's development, they are formalizing a task-enabling role. They are betting it will make a difference for a person's performance or growth. However, most task enabling happens informally, when one person reaches out to help another because they sense that they have something to offer and can make a difference. Critical and often-used enabling resources include emotional support, encouragement, recognition, guidance, task information, and flexibility. The most effective task enabling involves matching the resources provided to the task at hand and the specific style and needs of the person. Accordingly, task enabling often requires soliciting feedback about whether the help being provided meets the need. Sustained task enabling builds and supports HQCs, and works best when a continuous learning process is in place. Both people are soliciting and providing feedback that matches enabling resources with the particular needs of the person engaged in the task.

Pathway 3: Trust Others

Trusting another person is a pathway for building HQCs. Although a well-worn and frequent prescription, trusting others

at work can sometimes be difficult. Trusting means being vulnerable and relying on another person to follow through on their commitments. Trusting involves paying attention both to what you say and what you do, as well as to what you do *not* say and do. For example, good trusting moves include sharing resources, granting access, delegating responsibility, being open, and seeking input. However, trusting to build HQCs also means *not* monitoring and controlling excessively, ignoring input, acting inconsistently, or accusing another of bad intentions. Trust is hard work, especially if one has grown up or worked in contexts where it is a rare or misused condition. In addition, if trust is broken, it can be difficult and time consuming to repair. Despite these challenges, trusting moves are potent contributors to high-quality connections that make interrelating smoother, more efficient, and more enjoyable.

Pathway 4: Play

All species play, and humans at work are no exception. What is sometimes overlooked is the importance of play in building connections. Moments of play are moments of exploration and interaction, often building new knowledge and broadening action possibilities. They frequently evoke positive emotions, which open people up to new and generative ways of interacting. Play at work is often associated with innovation and creativity because it fosters new knowledge and develops cognitive skills.[16] However, the role of play in building connections—especially ones where people are energized and sense mutual regard—is often missed or underestimated. Play at work takes numerous forms. Some units or organizations institutionalize play through team-building activities, volunteer opportunities, or simply by having play supplies, such as ping-pong tables or basketball courts, read-

ily available. Leaders and employees can enact numerous moves to engage play, either in formal forums such as meetings or at informal gatherings such as celebrations. What is most important to remember about this pathway is that it exists as a powerful and low-investment option for building HQCs.

Designing Organizations That Foster Building and Maintaining High-Quality Connections

Leaders have multiple means for creating a work context that encourages both the creation and the sustenance of high-quality connections.[17] Leading for sustainable excellence in an organization means taking actions to create and to institutionalize a context where HQCs are the norm and the expected form of human-to-human interrelating for employees, customers, suppliers, and all relevant organizational stakeholders. Leaders have at least three design choices that are likely to cultivate and support high-quality connections.

Reward High-Quality Connection Building and Relational Skills

Leaders have several options for formally and informally rewarding effective connection building. Some leaders create team-based awards where a portion of an employee's incentives are tied to collective as well as individual performance. The use of team or group incentives focuses attention and motivation around collaboration, which fosters the building of high-quality connections.[18] Some leaders also encourage HQCs through the creation of spot awards or peer-controlled rewards, which allow for the recognition of excellence based on a peer's contribution to collective performance. Southwest Airlines is

one organization that deploys these types of incentives, and their use is one of the reasons analysts see them as highly effective in relational coordination.[19] Finally, leaders can encourage the building of relational skills (e.g., social intelligence or effective helping) as part of talent development, providing further incentives for creating and building a workforce that is sensitive to and invested in bettering their capacity to build and to sustain HQCs.

Build High-Quality Connection Routines and Practices

Routines and practices are repeated activities and ways of doing things that become typical and normative in any organization. Often taken for granted, these ways of acting may come to typify an organization, but they can be potent contributors to high-quality connection building. Multiple routines and practices foster HQC building. For example, some organizations explicitly select employees who have relationship-building attitudes and competencies. Others routinize significant peer involvement in employee selection as another means for building HQCs when a person begins their organizational membership. Still others utilize onboarding practices that are explicitly designed to foster rapid and significant quality connecting for newcomers.[20] Use of relational onboarding practice means giving priority to opportunities that enable newcomers to connect with the appropriate people, instead of overwhelming them with information. Finally, practices used during routine meetings can be potent means for fostering connections. For example, making sure people are introduced in ways that equip others to engage and to trust them, and facilitating people to be well prepared for meetings, are simple but potent practices to bring about high-quality connection building.

Model and Value High-Quality Connection Building

It is well known that leaders' behaviors model and influence what is appropriate conduct for organizational members and thus are critical shapers of an organization's culture. Consequently, if leaders wish to foster HQC building, they need to conduct themselves with this mindset and behavioral repertoire in much of what they do. Leaders can convey values and priorities that elevate the importance of connection building, setting the tone for others to see these behaviors as important and valued activities. Researchers writing about the impact of leadership on interpersonal caring and on the creation of caring cultures in organizations identify various leadership behaviors that can shape organizational-level caring (and provide support for the building of HQCs).[21] As an everyday example, leaders can act to be present, use face-to-face contact, and engage in active listening, demonstrating knowledge, understanding, and caring for the needs of various organizational constituencies. But leaders can also model values and behaviors in crisis, affecting members' motivation to connect in high-quality ways with others. Leaders' actions in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States were important shapers of members' connection-building activities.[22] As an example of crisis leadership, Phil Lynch, president of Reuters America, headquartered in New York City, took immediate actions to continuously and personally communicate and to be present with all his employees as they wrestled with both human losses and technical challenges associated with that day's horrific events. Leaders' actions toward others during times of duress and challenge leave an indelible impression of appropriate and desired ways of interrelating that last far beyond the immediate circumstances.

Putting It All Together

Bringing out the best in oneself, and in others, means paying attention to and investing in the quality of the social fabric where we are growing and performing. The quality of the social fabric is built one interaction at a time. When we make these interactions high quality, we build personal strength, and we also strengthen and enrich the fabric that sustains, grows, and facilitates others.

BUILDING HIGH-QUALITY CONNECTIONS WITH CLIENTS: THE CASE OF WESTON SOLUTIONS

Weston Solutions (hereafter Weston) is a global employee-owned firm delivering "integrated environmental, sustainability, property redevelopment, energy, and construction solutions for clients" (http://www.westonsolutions.com/about/index.htm). High-quality connections with clients are critical for Weston's strategic success because of the large financial stakes involved with each client engagement and the importance of client engagements for the company's reputation.

Weston's management intentionally cultivates awareness and commitment to the importance of building and helping others build HQCs with clients. The company provides training on HQC building for all project managers (PMs). An interview study with the PMs revealed three benefits of HQCs with clients. At the firm level, HQCs with clients yield financial benefits by reducing the need for price renegotiations during contract renewals, increasing contract renewal rates, and maintaining sole source supplier status. A PM explained that with HQCs, "we get challenging projects which are more profitable." At the project level, HQCs with clients keep engagements flexible and bring in more diverse work, while making client work more enjoyable. In addition, project managers report extensive personal and professional learning when client connections are high quality.

As leaders, PMs foster HQCs with clients using five strategies: (1) having frequent, open communication with clients with some regular face-to-

face contact; (2) personalizing the client relationship by connecting outside of work; (3) committing to always exceeding client expectations; (4) making early admission of mistakes or missed deadlines; and (5) being open, honest, dependable, transparent, and acting with integrity. Project managers looked for what would be home runs for clients and then tried to hit the ball "out of the park" to achieve quality. As one PM said, "You ask the client, 'Okay, for this particular assignment, what would a home run be for you?'" Another PM reflected the same core belief about hitting home runs: "It demonstrates to our customers and our clients that we're willing to do whatever it takes to make them successful. And at the end of the day, we're going to give them more than they paid for."

TWEETS

Did you know that short, momentary interactions with people at work are like vitamins that strengthen and fortify you throughout your day?

Expand your repertoires of ways to build high-quality connections by doing more task enabling, respectfully engaging, trusting, and playing more with others.

Have you considered how to design your team, unit, or organization to foster quality connections? Your life and performance depend upon it.

Thank You For Reading

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