

PeopleFocus

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Editor's Message

Workplace effectiveness often involves the "soft skills." Leadership and management require creativity, influence and strong relationships.

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Being effective at work is more than just being knowledgeable and technically skillful. It goes beyond one's academic education, qualifications and IQ. Often we have to break through our limiting beliefs and mental models to achieve peak performance.

Achieving peak performance should not be at the expense of workplace human interaction. Use empathy to connect with others and build relationships. Use effective presentation skills to connect with your audience. Learn these and more at the coming "**Dynamics of Leadership**" seminar next month.

In this issue of the **PeopleFocus** newsletter, we take a look at how we can change our mental models for the better, how to relate effectively with others and delivering dynamic presentations.

The **PeopleFocus** newsletter aims to provide informative articles and resources to organisations to help improve workplace performance and to individuals to develop their personal effectiveness in their career and life goals.

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Making "Impossible" Thinking Possible

Our businesses and our lives could be transformed powerfully by thinking "impossible" thoughts.

Think about it: How can things ever change - how can business, science or society innovate solutions to world dilemmas; how can our personal lives change trajectories - if we can only imagine what has been possible up to now? We might try to fix problems through automation, motivation and process improvement. But ultimately these efforts will stagnate until we change our mental models.

Our perspectives - the lenses through which we perceive and understand the world - affect all that we see and do. Problems occur when those perspectives become rigid and function more like prison bars, keeping us locked in set mental models, routines and behaviours.

What would happen if we broke out of the prison of those perspectives? What new patterns and relationships would we notice? What new actions would we take?



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"What we perceive as 'the world' is as much inside our heads as outside," write the authors of *The Power of Impossible Thinking*, Jerry Wind and Colin Crook. "By realizing this and making choices about how we see things, we can become much more effective."

Thinking impossible thoughts is not just the realm of fairy godmothers or eccentric inventors. We can all zoom in or out of our previous mindsets with a little practice. Wind and Crook suggest a variety of ways to begin to see differently - before a crisis or failure of the old model has made it too late. Here are a few:

Listen to the radicals

What wisdom and opportunities are there in the sometimes "bizarre" ideas of the radical thinkers around you?

Embark on journeys of discovery

Where can you travel? Mentally or physically? To gain fresh perspectives on your organization? Your life?

Look across disciplines

Often, "impossible" solutions develop at the intersection of several fields or departments. Crossing borders and moving into unfamiliar territory can help you see your situation from fresh perspectives.

Question the routine

While routines create needed structure, they can sometimes lull us to sleep. Disrupting the routine, even in small ways, can help us awaken to new possibilities.

Recognize the barriers

Becoming aware of the obstacles or fences that keep us from seeing new models is the first step to overcoming them.

Practice flying upside down

Like commercial airline pilots, who are trained in how to react to unusual emergencies (such as flying upside down!), we can look for ways to prepare for outrageous scenarios.

"Destroy" the old model

For example, imagining you will live only six more months can immediately obliterate all previous models of thought about how you would spend your days.

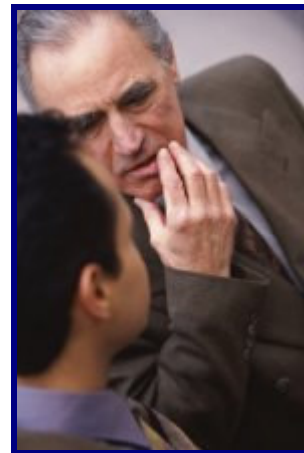
Envision multiple futures

What are some potential scenarios for the future, and what will you need to succeed in each one? ■

Be Empathetic Not Sympathetic

A key to relating effectively with another is to be able to feel what you'd be feeling if you were in their circumstances.

When you can do this, people feel understood, cared for, and willing to trust and share at a deeper level. This will be important if you facilitate groups working through emotional issues or any issues that become emotional. It will also be important not to rescue those that choose to not be responsible for their own feelings and actions.



Sympathy or Empathy?

Empathy, an innate human capacity that gives us the ability to understand the unique experiences of another person, is the most overlooked component of relationships. By allowing us to connect with one another on a meaningful and fulfilling level, it "can help and heal us all."

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So what's the difference between sympathy and empathy? Sympathy, while highly valued in our culture, can actually be very disempowering. The sympathetic perspective tends to place you above the other, placing you in a position that might sound something like, "Oh you poor thing, this is just terrible what's happening to you."

From an empathetic perspective, you understand what the other is feeling but don't necessarily "go there" with them. Instead, you view them as capable of working through the issue at hand.

If you were being empathetic in the same situation, you might say something like, "I sense that you're hurting right now. Is there any support you'd like to ask for right now?"

This stance is one of understanding and one that places the responsibility for getting the necessary help in the hands of the person who needs it. Don't rescue! Many people play the victim role so that others can play the rescuer role. Give people the opportunity to find the strength they need.

Practice

Practice using empathy the next time you're in a situation where someone is suffering emotionally. Be very present with them in an effort to understand what you might be feeling in a similar situation. Practice not getting caught in having the feeling yourself, but rather empower them to get the help they need to move forward. ■

Developing Dynamite Presentation Skills

What's the difference between a dry lecture and dynamic presentation?

Whether you're delivering a speech, conducting a workshop, presenting a new product idea or leading a teleclass, the answer is still the same: interaction.

When speaking, the goal is to connect to your audience in a personal way so your message will have more of an impact. This doesn't necessarily mean you have to constantly ask questions and aggressively involve your listeners verbally. What it does mean, however, is that

you have to build a rapport with them. Although this is developed partially by the verbal content of your presentation, a good portion of it comes from less obvious - and often nonverbal - elements. Below is a list of ways to build rapport while still being discreet about it.



Start off with a bang

Begin your presentation with an interesting introduction. Introductions warm up an audience not only to your topic, but to you as a speaker as well. It's useful to view your introduction as a snapshot of what a listener can expect from the rest of your presentation. First impressions are powerful, so make the most of yours.

Speak to "one" person

When speaking to a group, it's easy get impersonal. To avoid this, imagine you're speaking to only one person at a time. Powerful presenters have a way of making each listener feel spoken to directly.

Make eye contact

It's pretty basic stuff. If you look people in the eye, you connect with them more directly. Of course, if you're delivering your presentation or leading a class over the phone or Internet, your voice will have to convey this element of "I see you."

Control your speed

Although it's obvious advice, it's easy to forget when you're nervous: don't talk too fast or too slowly. Talking too fast will make you appear uneasy, and listeners won't be able to catch everything you say. Talking too slowly makes you appear boring and dull ... *yawn!* Try to find that middle ground where your natural personality is free to express itself.

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Shake it up

Vary the volume and rate of your speech - appropriate to your point, of course. When we talk to our friends one-on-one, we naturally vary these elements as our emotions and emphases shift. If you do this in your presentation, you'll come across as more human. *And* more interesting.

Don't be afraid to pause

The strategic use of pauses can make a point more dramatic and interesting to listen to, and as a result, more memorable.

Humor always helps

Although you're aiming for a professional image, who says professionals shouldn't laugh? If you can make a joke (a funny one only!) or tell a humorous anecdote, go for it. Humor is the ultimate magnet in that it makes you more "real" and likeable.

It's about them, not you

Instead of simply conveying information and the things you do (explaining features), couch this information in the form of a benefit. In other words, make it clear how it will make a positive difference in your listener's life. ■

Dynamics Of Leadership

Discover how you can motivate your staff and deliver "immense" performances.

Are your people "underperforming"? Does your staff take unnecessary time off? Are your people irritable, unable to concentrate, bored or under pressure? Discover the secrets of a differentiated winning team, gain insights into organizational growth and sustained corporate success.

The **DYNAMICS OF LEADERSHIP** programme is highly recommended to anyone who is in a demanding position and where knowledge of **PEOPLE Management** could improve personal or team performance and ultimately company profits.

[Learn more ...](#)

Ideal for KEY MANAGERS, DIRECTORS and BUSINESS OWNERS

Date : 19 - 20 April 2005

Time : 9.00am - 5.00pm (Registration starts at 8.30am)

Venue : National University of Singapore Society (NUSS), Suntec City Guild House

Click [Here](#) to Register Your Interest.

About Us



Lionel L Lim is the founder of Aurora Executive Solutions (AES), a Human Talent Management and Development Solutions firm. He is a US-certified EQ trainer, a career and life coach, a People's Association approved trainer, and a licensed facilitator of the Profiles occupational assessments. Lionel is also an experienced facilitator of the EQ Map, the Emotional Intelligence Style Inventory, MBTI tools and the INSIGHT Inventory.

Lionel is a graduate of the University of South Australia with a BA in Communication and Media Management. He also holds a Diploma in Training and a Certificate in Counselling Skills. Lionel has a varied experience in executive search, communication, leadership, training, coaching and mentoring, as well as the effective management of teams in both local and overseas assignments.

Lionel is a professional member of the Asian Association of Career Management Professionals, the Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Network, the Career Planning and Adult Development Network, the National Resume Writers' Association and the International Association of Coaches.

Our Programmes

- Hiring, Executive Selection & 360 Feedback Tools
- Leadership Development
- Team Effectiveness
- Communication Skills
- Workplace Effectiveness Skills
- Emotional Intelligence Development
- Career Coaching
- Life Coaching

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