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ISBN: 1499380917

ISBN 13: 9781499380910

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014908545

Createspace Independent Publishing Platform

North Charleston, South Carolina

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*To Jim, who has been by my side for over twenty years and has never lost faith  
in my dreams*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Getting Real* would not have been possible without the help and support of many wonderful people:

- My husband, Jim, and daughters, Nicole and Elizabeth, who have always encouraged my work and writing. Special thanks also goes to Jim, for reviewing my early drafts of this book with the critical eye of the son and grandson of newspapermen.
- My clients and colleagues who were often the inspiration for my weekly newsletters, many of whom generously gave me honest feedback and humbling praise for the newsletters that serve as the source for this book.
- Joe Boyett, who provided the wisdom and perspective of an author and co-author of sixteen books.
- Sharron Stockhausen for her editing and valuable guidance.

## INTRODUCTION

During my career, as I'm sure is true for you, I worked with many people who thought of themselves as leaders. Some of them actually were. They made me want to be part of something great and to perform at my highest level. Unfortunately, many were not. I don't think it's because they didn't want to be leaders. I think it's because they didn't know how. Some believed performance came from fear – fear of the competition, fear of negative consequences, fear that “if you don't, someone else will.” Some believed leadership came from their title or position. Some really weren't sure how to lead but hid behind the mask of corporate-speak, management lingo, and policy manuals. They weren't willing or able to get real about leadership. They didn't understand leadership is about connecting who they really are with who their people really are and building an organization that will tap into each one's very personal drive for excellence.

The work of the leader is to inspire and engage others in pursuit of a goal, providing the resources and environment for great things to happen. Trying to do that through the latest five-step process or by putting on the trappings of a leader or by winging it, often doesn't work. You see, in the early twenty-first century there is a more sophisticated workforce. They are more educated, more connected, and more demanding than any group of people to walk over the company threshold before. They don't want someone who walks and talks like leaders of the past. They want – and expect – a leader who is current and understands the now.

My passion is developing best-in-class leaders and organizations that engage and retain their biggest competitive advantage – the talent that comes to work every day. During my career as a manager and executive, and now as a consultant for over twenty years, I know that getting real about leadership means passing on the quick fixes, removing barriers between leaders and those they lead, finding and using strategies to help maximize the often limited time you have with your team, and getting results.

Leadership is hard work. And, in the world of work, leaders are faced with challenges like never before. Competition is increasing. Change occurs at a pace that has not been seen in the past. People are asked to do more with less. Excellence is essential in this environment and leaders are working harder to just stay ahead of the curve. The idea of taking a day or two or three to attend a leadership development session is difficult for many, even though they know it is important to continue to improve their capabilities. Coaching continues to grow as an effective development tool, but again, the cost and time commitment still makes it elusive for many except the most senior executives.

I wrote *Getting Real* because I know that your time is at a premium. Too often I see executives and managers spend time implementing leadership strategies that don't work or may seem effective at first only to have short-term impact. What does it mean to get real as a leader? *Getting Real* means understanding who you are as a leader and taking the actions that make a real impact on your organization, your people and your bottom-line. To know what you are all about. To be clear about what kind of leader you want to be. That's where this book begins.

*Getting Real* means making every action you take to build your organization and interaction you have with your team count. The bulk of this book focuses on how to maximize those actions and interactions. It looks at how you hire, motivate, develop, and retain talent to assure you are making real changes that get sustainable results. It contains seven coaching series, each containing several brief essays and Real Change Accelerators. These are meant to help you refocus and get real about the way you hire, engage, manage performance, retain, and develop the talent in your organization. You set the pace and you monitor your progress while keeping up with your everyday demands.

The first coaching series asks, "What does it mean to be a leader now?" Without knowing who you are as a leader and how to inspire

others to follow you, success will be elusive. This series lays the foundation for the rest of the work you'll do in the book.

The second series helps you reflect, then take action to hire effectively. Too often the hiring process is not treated with the same rigor as other key business processes. This series shows you how to remedy that.

In the third series, you're challenged to *Get Real* about performance by ensuring you have the right people, creating engaging and relevant goals, setting expectations through action, and providing feedback that really impacts performance. It will help you *Get Real* about expectations and results.

Coaching series four helps you focus on the factors that drive sustained engagement. Here's a hint: it's not the money.

Coaching series five discusses how to have powerful career development conversations and identify your next generation leaders. This series helps you *Get Real* about developing yourself and those you lead.

The sixth series talks about a critical component to leadership success in today's environment – change and innovation – and how to lead it, why change initiatives are often engagement killers, and how to make innovation an ongoing part of your culture. Change occurs at breakneck speed in today's world of work and you need to *Get Real* about dealing with it.

The final coaching series helps you reflect on continuing your leadership journey. Leadership, like life, is a journey. By the time you complete your *Getting Real* coaching sessions in this book, you'll be well on your way to being an even more effective leader.

Each leadership essay is discreet from the next and is meant to be read, reflected on, and put into practice over the course of a few

## INTRODUCTION

days, maybe a week, before moving on to the next. This book is meant to be written-in, dog-eared, and returned to again and again as you continue to Get Real about leadership. Now turn the page and get started.

## Coaching Series #1 **What Does it Mean to be a Leader Now?**

Twenty-first century leadership is complex. The workforce is more diverse than ever before. Various options exist for those we work with and how we work with them. Technology is changing at breakneck speed. Our customers may be around the corner, around the world, or both. Today's successful leaders know who they are, know why they are leaders, and share that understanding and personal philosophy with others. An effective leader has a strong moral compass and set of values. He has a vision based on a compelling purpose for his own and his organization's life. Leadership is no longer about holding power but about sharing power. The ability to lead is built on a foundation of trust. Your first five Getting Real sessions will help you explore what it means to be a leader now.

## Getting Real Session #1

### Why Are You a Leader?

*In the context of an organization where people ideally share purpose, the power of knowing 'why' each of us chooses our role helps us be more productive. It's often difficult to do something well if we don't know the reasons we're doing it to begin with. People at work are thirsting for context.*

- Daniel Pink

When you're the leader, others in your organization look to you to provide direction and context for your actions and the company's actions. One of the most powerful things you can do is provide context by answering the question "why?" for yourself. Specifically by answering the question "why am I a leader?"

It's important to think about why you do the work you do. What is it that made you want to lead others? Why do you come to work every day? Those around you take clues from what you say and what you do about what is important and why it's important. Understanding why you do the work you do and why you've chosen to lead in your organization facilitates real alignment of purpose within the organization.

Be a role model for Getting Real by considering these questions:

- **Why am I in this role?** What makes you get up in the morning and come to work? Share that story with others in the organization. Tell them why you've chosen to be a leader.
- **Why are other people in their roles?** Do you have any idea why the people on your team choose to be here doing the work they're doing? What about your peers? Your boss?
- **Why does your organization exist? What is your compelling purpose?** I would argue that if you can only come up with "to provide shareholder value" or "to make a profit," you are going to

come up short in the eyes of many people. Many people don't think the main reason they come to work is to drive up stock prices for investors or money for the owners. That may be an outcome of the work that is done and the value the organization creates, but it's not really the answer to "why?" people are thirsting for.

- **How do these three why's align?** Leaders may have different reasons for being in their roles and still be aligned around a common purpose. How does this collection of why's build the tapestry that delivers value to customers, shareholders, employees, and communities? Discover why you are a leader by examining your own answers to the three why's, then seeing how you use them to deliver the value you do by completing the Take Action! Change Accelerator below.

#### Take Action! Real Change Accelerator

Why am I in this role?

Why are other people in their roles?

Why does our organization exist? What's its compelling purpose?

How do these three why's align?

## Getting Real Session #2

### The Moral Compass of a Leader: Learning from Revolutionary Leaders

A radical group of leaders created a new country in the late eighteenth century – the United States of America. When you look at the leadership characteristics of this group, with the likes of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin, the lessons we can learn from them are as relevant today as they were three centuries ago.

**Leaders have a strong moral compass and stand up for their beliefs, sometimes against immense odds.** By signing the Declaration of Independence, the members of the Continental Congress were committing treason which is a pretty serious statement about their beliefs. At the core, their decision to sign the Declaration and commit treason was based on their personal moral grounding about the rights of government and the rights of the people. They used that moral compass and their integrity to guide them against the superpower of the day.

In their book, *Moral Intelligence*, Doug Lennick and Fred Kiel, state, “The most successful leaders in any company are likely to be trustworthy individuals who have a strong set of moral beliefs and the ability to put them into action. Further, even in a world that occasionally rewards bad behavior, the fastest way to build a successful business is to hire those people with the highest moral and ethical skills you can find.”<sup>1</sup> If you look back over the past several years, in the wake of high-profile business scandals like Enron, the Bernie Madoff ponzi scheme, and the behavior of some Wall Street firms leading up to and during the 2008 economic crisis, some would assert that too many business leaders lack a moral compass. The importance of a strong moral compass is as important today, if not more so, as it was 240 years ago.

<sup>1</sup> *Moral Intelligence: Enhancing Business Performance and Leadership Success*, Doug Lennick and Fred Kiel, PhD., 2008, Pearson Education publishing as Wharton School Publishing, p. xxxiii

**Leaders listen.** The conversations and debates that led to the Declaration were often heated. Different delegates held very different views about independence and about each other. Each one’s views were heard and debated. Unity is possible only if each person feels he is heard and his ideas are given a fair shake. Each person in that room was at times a leader and at other times a follower. Yet, at every turn, each was grounded by his personal moral compass.

**Leaders stand as one.** After the debates and conversations, compromise was reached, and once each signed his name, the group stood as one behind the words on the page. Benjamin Franklin marked the occasion with the words, “We must all hang together or assuredly, we shall all hang separately.” Their belief in the concept of independence superseded potential personal injury or gain.

#### Take Action! Real Change Accelerator

How have you used your moral compass at work this week?

How well do you truly listen to others, letting them lead?

On what issues have your leadership team stood as one?

When have they been a house divided?

### Getting Real Session #3

#### Create a Leadership Philosophy

We often talk about leadership styles and leadership behaviors but don't often talk about our leadership philosophy <sup>1</sup>. Having and knowing your leadership philosophy is critical for understanding and articulating who you are as a leader.

Every individual has a life philosophy. Life philosophy is a way of putting values together to guide behavior. You knowingly or unknowingly live your life in accordance with the philosophy you embrace. A *leadership philosophy* integrates your organizational purpose with the practical values and moral reasoning that you believe are essential to achieving that purpose. A leadership philosophy also drives how you define and measure results. Effective leaders are very aware of their leadership philosophy. They not only communicate their philosophy, they can also be trusted to act in accordance with that philosophy.

Think about your leadership philosophy. What is it and what impact does it have on you, your team and your organization? This question may feel like one of those grandiose, navel-gazing questions that you don't really have time for in your resource-constrained, time-strapped, multi-tasking work world. However, when you give it some thought, it actually will offer some benefit in helping you deal with your challenges.

How so? Purpose and values should serve as the focus for your activities. They should help you decide what's important, what needs doing, and what doesn't have to be done or can be done later.

As a leader, by returning to your purpose and clearly understanding your leadership philosophy, you can prioritize and evaluate what is asked of you daily. If your purpose is to serve customers, you should ask yourself how you're leading your team to achieve that result. If your purpose is

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<sup>1</sup> I was introduced to the concept of a leadership philosophy by Michael Maccoby while attending a certification program for Becoming a Leader We Need with Strategic Intelligence.

driven by the core values of competence and collaboration, how are you creating an environment where that can occur?

Once you've crafted your leadership philosophy, validate that it is meaningful to you. Read it several times over during the next two weeks. Does it resonate with you? If someone asked you to, would you stand behind its representation of yourself to others?

#### Take Action! Real Change Accelerator

What is the purpose of our organization?

What is my purpose as a leader?

Which organizational values support that purpose?

How do my personal values align with organizational values?

Do we function in a way that benefits or does not harm all or any of those who may be impacted by our actions?

How does the organization define results? Is this consistent with my leadership philosophy?

## Getting Real Session #4

### The Vision Thing

Earlier in my career, I was interviewing with the senior vice president (SVP) of human resources, the chief people officer, to obtain a senior role in a large insurance company. He was still fresh to the company, having been there about six months. I asked him where the firm was going and what made him get up in the morning and go to work. He looked at me and, with a shrug, said, “Edith, it’s insurance,” like I had just asked the craziest question in the world. Perhaps it was silly to expect that a senior leader, six months into his job would be able to articulate a compelling picture of the place he worked, but I don’t think so. *He had a golden opportunity to communicate his vision of what this organization was about and where it was going, and he came up with nothing.* There was no second interview.

This story is not meant to reflect badly on the insurance company. I know plenty of executives in insurance companies who would answer that question very differently.

This SVP obviously wasn’t able to communicate a vision. Many organizations lack in “the vision thing.” Instead, they focus on a lot of things that may be important but that people perceive as negative – cutting costs, losing sales and revenues, reducing headcount etc.

Whether you’re focused on increasing revenue, creating a better customer experience, or developing your company’s next product, the first step for creating competitive advantage is to develop a clear vision. The overall company vision is developed by the CEO or board. However, I would argue that each leader should also articulate a clear, compelling vision for his group that is aligned with the overall company vision. You need to create a vision and expectations that are so *clear* it is difficult to wonder *where are we going?* or *what should I be doing?* It should be so *compelling* no one needs to ask *why am I doing this?* Instead, they say *I need to be a part of this.*

The Real Change Accelerator at the end of this session has several questions you need to ask yourself when creating your vision. If your answer is “I don’t know” to any of these, you’re going to be less able to attract or retain top talent as you move forward. You’ll be appealing to people who want a job but not be attractive to people who want to make an impact. Without a sense of where they’re going your people can’t perform at the high levels you need or expect.

Be ready to talk about your vision and gauge reactions to it. After all, you don’t want to find yourself saying, with a shrug, “Edith, it’s...”

#### Take Action! Real Change Accelerator

Where does my organization (or division or group or team) need to go?

Why are we going in that direction?

What will we look like a year from now, and how will we get there?

How will we know we’re successful?

Why do I want to be part of this vision? Why should someone else want to be part of it?

## Getting Real Session #5

### Leadership is a Relationship

An often asked question is, what is the difference between leadership and management? Several years ago, I was in a meeting with leadership expert Michael Maccoby when he was asked this very question. He gave a very simple, elegant response. “Management,” he said, “is a role. Leadership is a relationship.” Leaders are not leaders without followers. People don’t follow because someone has a title. They follow because a leader has created a connection to something in which they want to participate.

Leaders’ relationships with their people can be strained by the difficult decisions leaders sometimes need to make. Trust, a key part of any relationship, can be damaged by financial decisions, staffing changes, decisions about strategic direction, etc. Building or rebuilding leadership trust and our relationships with those we work with is a critical component of building successful organizations.

If leadership is a relationship, how do we build real relationships at work—not transactional relationships focused on the tasks and activities needed to get work done but relationships where we are creating a work environment where the sum is greater than the parts?

In their book, *The Trusted Advisor*, David Maister, Charles Green, and Robert Galford discuss the trust equation<sup>1</sup>, a formula for building sustained partnership with others. While they discuss the equation’s importance to business advisors, I believe this equation describes the elements of trust that are key to real leadership.

**The trust equation is:**

$$\text{Trust} = \frac{\text{C} + \text{R} + \text{I}}{\text{S}}$$

<sup>1</sup> David H. Maister, Charles H. Green, Robert M. Galford, *The Trusted Advisor*, The Free Press, 2000, page 69.

**C** is credibility. Leadership credibility has two components. The first is how much your team believes your words and actions. The second is to what degree you have the know-how, experience, or background to know what you are talking about. On the one hand, it’s objective – do you have the qualifications to be a leader? On the other hand, it’s an emotional response. Do I perceive you as being believable? Do your actions reflect truthfulness? Do I believe you have truthful intent? How many experiences have you had in your career that made you question the truthfulness of those you considered leaders? What’s the lingering impact of that real or perceived lack of truthfulness on the organization?

**R** is reliability. People need to know they can count on leaders. They need to know leaders will do what they say they will do, and behave consistently. Leaders need to follow through on promises and follow up on commitments. There needs to be a sense of predictability and fairness in the way a leader approaches situations and people every single day. Otherwise, the relational bank account that funds trust goes into the red.

In the trust equation, **I** is intimacy or the ability create a personal connection. This does not mean that as a leader you need to share your private life or dwell on the private lives of your people. It means recognizing that work is a personal place and issues like career development, promotions, compensation, reorganizations, hiring, and firing are intensely personal. I often think of it as dealing with others with authenticity. As a leader, the willingness to have emotional honesty about these and other issues in the workplace increases the trust your team places in you and the commitment they have to your agenda.

Credibility, reliability, and intimacy’s additive effect is mitigated by how much others perceive a leader is acting primarily out of self-orientation, the **S** in the equation. If others believe a leader is building a relationship primarily to serve his or her own interests – i.e., to advance his or her career, to manipulate a situation for advantage without regard to the goals, needs, and struggles of others, or to push off responsibility and

What Does it Mean to be a Leader Now?

blame others– trust is destroyed. The relationship is seen as disingenuous and engagement and commitment plummet.

**Take Action! Real Change Accelerator**

As you look at yourself as a leader, think about your own trust equation. To what degree have you developed a real relationship with your people?

What's missing from your relationship with others in the organization?

Coaching Series #2  
**Getting Real from the  
Beginning: Hiring that Works**

Hiring the best isn't just about finding the perfect candidate for the job. Today, top candidates know they are in demand, and they want to work for leaders who will help them excel even more. Successful hiring is about finding the perfect candidate who wants to go to work for you. When you Get Real about hiring, you focus on not just who you're hiring but how you're hiring. The two Getting Real sessions in this series will help you think about why someone should come to work for you and how to avoid hiring someone who was great in the interview but will be a bust on the job.

## Getting Real Session #6

### Why Should I Come to Work for You?

Highly talented, successful job candidates are always in high demand. There never seem to be enough. Even in the depths of the recent recession we hear that companies had openings they couldn't fill because they couldn't find the right candidates.

What if it wasn't the candidates but the companies that caused the deficit? What if the right candidates stayed away because they couldn't see value in what the company had to offer?

When we hire, we tend to look at hiring as a one-way street, i.e., I have a need and I need someone who meets my specifications. But that thinking creates a problem. Hiring is a two-way street. We have a need for someone to meet our specifications and as we should. We always want the best. The most talented candidates also have needs and specifications they want companies to meet. Top talent often has the upper hand in the hiring scenario. They know that what they have is in demand in the marketplace. They can be selective about where they will work.

To attract and hire the best, you need to know what you have to offer that's attractive to a top tier candidate. While money is important to them, it is by no means the only thing that's important. For many, money ranks third or fourth most important.

Top talent wants to be part of a company that is going somewhere. They want to work for a company whose values align with their own. Top talent looks for a sense of community. If they can't identify with your culture or if you can't define your culture in ways that speaks to them, they will choose to go elsewhere. Top talent doesn't want to stagnate. Even if they're in the same role for five years, they want to know there is opportunity to grow within that role to take on new challenges and build their capabilities.

During the interview process, candidates will ask, "What's the best thing about working here?" Don't let your answer be just "the money" or some vague answer like "the opportunity." Be able to articulate a strong brand and provide examples that can bring the brand to life. Show top talent why working for you and your company is the best decision they can make.

#### **Take Action! Real Change Accelerator**

What are the values, mission, and purpose of your organization?

Describe your organization's culture? What do people say about what it's like to work for you or your company?

What opportunities will people in your organization have to grow and develop?

## About the Author

Edith Onderick-Harvey is a highly sought after consultant and partner for clients who need to strategically think about human capital. She works with industry leading and high-growth organizations to develop, engage and retain the best people, design effective organizations and achieve results. She has led and managed U.S.-based and international engagements with a focus on the innovation sector – high tech, life sciences, higher education and financial services. Over the course of her career she has been a Partner with Bridge Avenue Partners in charge of marketing, worked with Accenture and had internal leadership roles for five years with BankBoston (now Bank of America) and Fidelity Investments.

Edith has published articles on building sustainable talent pipelines and effectively communicating change. She has been quoted in The New York Times, Human Resource Executive, CNN.com and In The Black. Her work with Harvard University is featured in The Conference Board publication “Evidence-based HR in Action.” She has also published research on Leadership in the Next Decade.

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