



## LEADERSHIP COACHING NEWSLETTER

# This Month's Topic: **Leadership Under Pressure**

I currently work with someone who seems stressed out more often than not. She is often short on time, working to meet yet another impossible deadline, often running late, and rushing through conversations if you can even book time with her as she is jam-packed with meetings. Working with this person has a feverish whirling dervish feel to it. And people around her run for cover and avoid her if they can. When they can't, they give her answers they think she wants to hear just to shut her up and get her off the phone or out of their office.

### **Stress**

People behave differently under stress. It's important to know how to lead and react under normal conditions, and it is equally important to know how you react under stress. A leader's actions during stressful times have a profound impact on the firm's culture and employees' behaviors. Successful leaders must be aware of their personal stress triggers and reactions. Yet, keep in mind that behaviors should be consistent with beliefs and core values, no matter how severe the stress.

Pressure is a normal part of doing business, but it affects people differently. What may evoke anxiety for one individual may not bother someone else. As a leader, you are watched closely – by peers and employees. Emotions are contagious — even more so when they come from the leader.

You must be sufficiently self-aware to recognize the situations that create anxiety for you and manage your behavior, to avoid sending counterproductive messages to your people.

Ask yourself:

Which events create pressure for me?

How do I behave under pressure?

What signals do I send to subordinates?

Are these signals helpful, or do they undermine the success of my business?

### **Staying True to Yourself**

Successful executives develop leadership styles that fit their business needs, as well as their personal beliefs and personality. While many leaders ask themselves about the former, few analyze the latter.

Companies require leaders who can express strongly held views, rather than mimic the party line. Do you hold back for political reasons? Do you encourage your people to express their opinions and make waves, if appropriate?

Don't tiptoe around significant issues or foster an atmosphere that encourages employees to do so. You may need to get coaching and learn skills about how to present these issues so that you don't foster fear and animosity.

Ask yourself:

Is my leadership style comfortable?

Does it reflect who I truly am?

Do I assert myself sufficiently?

Have I become tentative?

Am I too politically correct?

Does anxiety about my next promotion or bonus cause me to hesitate when I want to express my views?

In the early stages of your career, you may have received plenty of guidance and support from superiors and mentors. As you've been promoted however, you've probably encountered fewer sources of honest and useful feedback. By the time mistakes come to light, it may be too late to fix them.

Successful leaders continually ask themselves hard questions to stay on track in a world of rapid change. Remember to step back and gain fresh perspectives, so that you're prepared with a new game plan when change occurs. If you're standing too close to the blackboard, you won't see mistakes until it's too late.

These questions are designed to ignite serious introspection. They can be even more productive when discussed with a trusted advisor, coach or mentor.

When is the last time you had a leadership checkup?

## Recommendations

Recommended reading: *"The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook"* by Martha Davis, Matthew McKay, and Elizabeth Robbins Eshelman and *"You Want me to Work with Who?: Eleven keys to a Stress-Free Satisfying and Successful Work Life"* by Julie Jansen.

Recommended Corporate Leadership University training courses: [Click here](#). These courses are conducted by Vision Quest Consulting at your location of choice. Call or email us for more information. 978-692-4454, [wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com](mailto:wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com)

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