

Breakthrough Leadership – the fundamentals

A major challenge for leaders today is unlocking the potential of the people they lead – this is the challenge of breakthrough leadership. Our research shows that there are six behaviours that leaders can employ to breakthrough the psychological barriers that prevent many people in the workforce from achieving their potential. At any time in the workforce there is a significant loss of opportunity because organisations do not harness the full resource at their disposal.

Many in the workforce are at a plateau in their career or have stopped in their development and there are some who never really got started. These all represent a significant loss of potential for the individual, their teams and the organisations concerned and ultimately for the customers served. This is the hidden value that lies dormant which if awakened could bring great benefits to all concerned. It is extracting this hidden value that is the domain of breakthrough leaders.

Each of the behaviours identified is based on a simple concept. However when they are taken together they form an action plan for breakthrough leadership. This leadership is essentially personal, but in the context of the right strategic leadership can provide a powerful platform for transformational change. Our research shows clearly the six key behaviours that leaders can deploy to unlock this potential.

1. Showing a genuine interest in the development of each person.

The emphasis is on “genuine interest”. It means taking the time to build a deeper professional relationship with each individual and doing this in a way which is personal and sincere.

2. Listening to people and asking them for their ideas.

This displays respect for the person and a belief that they have something of value to contribute. It indicates that the leader does not have all of the answers and is prepared to listen to the thoughts and ideas of others.

3. Acting on the advice you receive.

You don't have to act on all advice received but on enough to show people not only that their opinions matter, but also that they can influence the agenda. When people see the impact of their ideas on outcomes they have a significantly more ownership on decisions made. This is the first step on the road to empowerment whereby individuals gradually gain greater influence, accept greater accountability and deliver better results.

4. Setting challenges for individuals and showing confidence in their ability to deliver.

To do this you need to know each person well. You need to know what is an appropriate challenge for each person and to do this you need to understand the alignment between business and personal goals and correctly judge the ability and the learning aptitude of the person concerned.

5. Supporting and coaching.

When leaders provide support that put in place a safety net which can give the individual the courage to step “out on a limb” and the coaching then gives them the hands on development required to master new skills. People will have greater confidence to try something new when they see that there is support available to them.

6. Giving feedback and recognition.

Feedback and recognition are important ingredients in building a relationship because they show the depth of care that a leader has. Over time they are key ingredients in building resilience and sustaining motivation. This active, constructive, involvement with the leader not only builds capability but also contributes to building of self esteem in the individuals concerned.

Taken together these behaviours have a powerful impact and can provide the support necessary to break through impediments to personal development. Whilst the behaviours can form an integrated plan of action they are only effective when delivered by leaders in a way that is genuine, consistent and personal.

