

CORRINNE
ARMOUR

ANNELI
BLUNDELL

BELINDA
COHEN

Developing Direct Reports



Taking the guesswork out
of leading leaders

**CORRINNE
ARMOUR**

**ANNELI
BLUNDELL**

**BELINDA
COHEN**



Developing Direct Reports

Taking the guesswork out
of leading leaders

Bacca House Press, Melbourne Australia
Developing Direct Reports: Taking the guesswork
out of leading leaders
Corrinne Armour, Anneli Blundell and Belinda Cohen

Copyright ©2015 by Corrinne Armour,
Anneli Blundell and Belinda Cohen
All Rights Reserved

ISBN: 978-0-9942601-1-6

Edited by Cavalletti Communications
Cover & Interior Design by Logo Pogo

All rights reserved. This book was self-published by the authors Corrinne Armour, Anneli Blundell and Belinda Cohen under Bacca House Press. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any means without the express permission of the authors. This includes reprints, excerpts, photocopying, recording or any future means of reproducing text.

If you would like to do any of the above, please seek permission first by contacting one of the authors at www.corrinnearmour.com, www.anneliblundell.com, www.belindacohen.com.

Published in Australia by Bacca House Press.
First Edition

BHP

Bacca House Press

About the Authors

Corrinne Armour

Waging a war on wasted potential, Corrinne's mission is empower leaders and teams to get out of their own way and embrace 'fearless leadership'. Known for her innovative approach, results focus and the ability to tell it like it is, she is recognised as a provoker of change and growth.

After living in Asia for a few years, Corrinne cooks a mean curry.

Anneli Blundell

As a professional 'people whisperer', Anneli has been working with leaders and teams to improve their communication and interpersonal intelligence for almost a decade. She brings to her clients a recognised expertise in the field of 'below conscious communication' and motivation and is obsessed with decoding people and performance dynamics for improved results.

Anneli also rates herself as an excellent parallel parker.

Belinda Cohen

Performance improvement is at the heart of all Belinda's work. With a natural curiosity for what drives behavioural diversity, Belinda brings a non-judgmental, supportive and 'no excuses' approach to her clients. She combines her legal and leadership experience with her passion for helping people work smarter. Belinda assists her clients to simplify the complex to bring about fresh perspectives and a new focus.

Belinda's ability to plan and book travel of any kind is an enviable skill.

All three are accomplished speakers, trainers and mentors. Together, they have published two other specialist reference books on shifting human behaviour. They are all passionate about their family, the privilege of doing great work with wonderful clients and quality dark chocolate.

Testimonials

“Wow — you can’t help but be a better leader after reading this book. But more importantly, this book will give you the savvy to develop leadership in others. Deeply insightful and incredibly practical — an essential primer for any leader of leaders looking to develop the leaders of tomorrow.”

– Dr Jason Fox, bestselling author of *The Game Changer*

“One of the challenges for executives in senior leadership roles is the significant investment of time spent on managing people issues and growing the next generation of leaders. And yet few executives are trained in the basics of psychology to help navigate through difficult people issues and know the best interventions to help grow their people.

‘Developing Direct Reports’ is a life line for any executive who can clearly see the impact of their direct reports’ behaviour, but is unsure what to do. The book provides practical advice on how to diagnose leadership derailers and simple coaching tips to effectively develop people.

For those executives brave enough to hold up the mirror and assess one’s own behaviours, ‘Developing Direct Reports’ is also a valuable tool for their own leadership development.”

– Chris Akayan, Group General Manager - Human Resources, Mirvac

“Developing Direct Reports is so much more than just another leadership toolbox. It’s a flight-path for any leader who wants to effectively forecast, navigate and enjoy the complexities and opportunities which leading any team entails. There’s both laughter and solemn recognition to be had in reflecting on the 12 Leadership Derailers, which forms an inspirational platform for a key takeaway: that leadership is a privilege we should never take for granted.”

– Sean Hughes, Senior Executive

“This book takes an enigmatically practical approach: a readable deep-dive into self-awareness, team-awareness and the neuroscience of leadership ... balanced by practical step-by-step checklists anyone can follow. In our complex, changing world, knowing how to work with people and issues and “discover, decode and design” solutions is vital. The practical coaching tips included can be applied to any of the 12 leadership “derailer” behaviours that will be all-too-familiar to new and experienced leaders alike. Government, business, social sector: people are people and have shared subconscious drivers and concerns: and almost every interpersonal contingency is addressed. This book should form part of the library of every manager: either as a quick-check refresher for senior executives, as a go-to source of inspiration and ideas for emerging leaders, or as an essential reference for everyone else. Easy to read, straight to the point, and with depth for almost any workplace situation.”

– Richard Dent OAM FAICD, Chief Executive, Leadership Victoria

Dedication

We dedicate this book to our families and loved ones.

Acknowledgements

They say it takes a village to raise a child. We say it takes a community to write a book. We may have typed the words on to the pages but that was just the beginning. Finding the time to work on the book, both as a group and separately, in and around our daily lives, was only made possible by the good graces and unconditional support of our loved ones, to whom we are forever grateful ... again. (Yes, this is our third book together!)

The polishing and refinement of our ever-evolving (and we mean EVER evolving!) ideas and understandings were made possible by our tribe of inspiring, accomplished, wise and supportive mentors. You know who you are and we're sure you know how grateful we are. Just in case you don't – we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for challenging our thinking and calling us forward into our own creativity and contribution.

To our fantastic support team of virtual assistants, editors and designers, we thank you for your patience and professionalism as we waded our way towards to the finish line.

To our clients past and present, we thank you for providing the inspiration (and case studies) for this work. Doing the work we do every day would not be the pleasure it is if it weren't for the calibre of people we get to play with on a daily basis. You have shaped us as experts, you have affected us as people, and you have inspired us to share our experiences beyond our private engagements. It is because of you and your journeys that we are able to share the collective wisdom of growth, learning and the power of potential with the rest of the world. Thank you.

To each of you reading this book, we thank you for investing your time and attention (today's most precious assets), in our work. We thank you for trusting us to provide the value and relevance to make a difference in your world. May this book inform you and inspire you and allow you to connect your people to their potential in new and interesting ways.

A note to the reader

The leadership concepts in this book are explored through the stories of 'Mary' and 'Chris', whose experiences are compilations drawn from our collective client base.

We acknowledge that 'Mary' as the direct report could have easily been 'Mark', and 'Chris' as her manager could have been 'Christine'. We chose to stick with 'Mary' and 'Chris' throughout the book to keep the reading simple and clear.

Table of Contents

<i>About the Authors</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Testimonials</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>A note to the reader</i>	<i>xi</i>
Introduction	7
How to best use this book	11
Part 1 - Why Develop Your Direct Reports? _____	17
Why leadership of leaders needs to change	19
Why developing your direct reports matters	33
Part 2 - How To Develop Your Direct Reports _____	39
The mindset for developing leadership performance.....	41
Three steps to develop your direct reports	53
Leading leaders through a coaching approach	63
Part 3 - The 12 Leadership Derailers _____	67
Staller - analysis paralysis	69
Controller - command and control	83
Cyclone - bull at a gate	97
Doer - can't delegate.....	109
Avoider - conflict averse.....	125
Fence-sitter - indecisive leader	137
Know-it-all - closed to other ideas	151
Guardian - inability to innovate	163
Micromanager - management on a leash	175
Poker face - showing no emotion	189

People burner - poor people skills	201
Tactician - poor strategic thinker.....	215
Wild Card questions, coaching tips and activities	229
Part 4 - More On The Imperative To Change Leadership	
Development Right Now _____	235
Developing direct reports requires new thinking	237
Performance management is broken	245
Final thoughts.....	251
Notes	253
Index.....	261

Introduction

Who should read this book?

Are you ready – ready to connect your direct reports with their leadership potential, and hone your own leadership capacity along the way? This book is for leaders of leaders, who aspire to do better in their roles by developing leadership in others. If you support leadership – people such as coaches, consultants and HR professionals – you too will come away with ideas, practical examples of leadership in action and the wherewithal to truly develop great leadership.

As executive coaches, our role is to help leaders achieve their objectives and potential. The good news is the proof is there. You can learn to develop leadership in others, and lead well. We have witnessed great transformation and we will share the techniques we have used to successfully develop sustainable high performance leadership in this book.

There's a popular saying that suggests, "IQ gets you hired and EQ gets you promoted". We assume that you or your people have the technical expertise needed for the job. However, when technical experts get promoted they don't always have leadership skills; that's where this book will help.

Former Chairman and CEO of General Electric, Jack Welch, said, "Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others." We understand how important a leader's leader is to the success of their development. One of the most important roles a leader has is to inspire others to success; so we want to help leaders to do this. This book will help you become a leader who brings out the best in your direct reports. It will improve your understanding of those you lead and will help you to better understand your own behaviour and leadership potential.

A targeted approach

In this book you will learn how to take the guesswork out of developing your direct reports by taking a targeted approach to leadership development. You will understand the value of identifying and responding to the drivers of behaviour, rather than taking a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach.

We want to shift leaders from the ‘send him/her to a training program’ mindset to a targeted and holistic approach to leadership development. Don’t get us wrong, we are not anti-training programs (we run them ourselves), but they have limited reach and in this book, we explain why.

We learn best on the job

Targeted development opportunities on the job are where the greatest learning occurs, and feedback must be timely and ongoing. It is all about you fulfilling your role as a developer of people to ensure they reach their potential. This kind of development is more personalised. Through the application of the principles, thinking and techniques shared in this book, you will become confident in having honest development conversations with your direct reports to help them get out of their own way and be greater leaders.

It’s all about intention

A Center for Creative Leadership study¹ found that a key factor associated with executive derailment is “having problems with interpersonal relationships”. The heart of our work centres on the principle that before you take any action in relation to observed behaviours, you must first understand the positive intentions that drive that behaviour. Like Stephen Covey said, “Seek first to understand and then be understood”. It is only when there is true understanding that the next best step can be identified and actioned.

Imagine that you are frustrated that Janine, your recently promoted Operations Manager, is falling further behind and seems to lack basic time management skills. You might be very tempted to send her on a time management course and many leaders do just that. However we know from experience that by the time a person has been promoted to a leadership position, it is unlikely that a skills deficit alone (i.e. time management skills) will be the primary cause of their failure. A different type of approach and conversation is required.

The 12 leadership derailers

As well as providing you with a proven framework for leadership development conversations, this book addresses 12 of the most common leadership derailers in your people. These derailers are the ones we regularly see raised in 360-degree feedback, are often discussed in performance reviews and are frequently addressed inappropriately or not at all.²

For each leadership derailer, we provide a framework for targeted behaviour change. This will enable you to address the issue at its root cause rather than applying a band-aid solution that might not be sustained over time. This book won't cover all behaviours, skills and circumstances. There may also be situations that fall outside the scope of this book because they have a deeper psychological base or are just less common. As the saying goes, "If pain persists see your doctor".

We are confident that this book will help you lift the performance of your direct reports. The payback for your efforts will be improved performance of your leaders so they can get the right work done well. We know that when you empower your people to be their best, and do what they love in a way that works, magic happens.

How to best use this book

As individuals, everyone is different and there are endless ways we can filter and apply meaning to the circumstances and events in our lives. Successful leaders are well aware of the challenge this presents. An approach taken with one team member may not be appropriate for another, or even the same person at a later time.

This book offers you the flight path to navigate through common leadership development challenges. We have developed a framework that will assist you to identify and understand the challenge at hand. You'll learn to prepare for and conduct the essential development conversations with your leaders that expand their awareness and equip them to respond.

In selecting the 12 leadership derailers, we referenced both our collective experience as leadership coaches, and the skills the theorists say are essential for today's working environment.³ We have addressed the areas where we see our clients make the most significant gains for themselves, their team and their organisation.

While not purposely written for you to identify your own development opportunities, we would be surprised if you don't also learn about yourself along the way!

The 12 leadership derailers are:

Staller – analysis paralysis:

From the outside, these leaders are perceived as blockers to progress. They often take too long to take action and therefore risk missing key deadlines or opportunities.

Controller – command and control:

‘Control freak’ could be another descriptor. These leaders stifle initiative and innovation in their team members as they strive to ensure all goes according to their plan.

Cyclone – bull at a gate:

In a hurry to achieve results, these leaders often leave a wake of destruction (disengaged team members and stakeholders) as they fail to appropriately engage people in their rush to the finish line.

Doer – can’t delegate:

Enough said!

Avoider – conflict averse:

Often mistaken for being easygoing or seen as a ‘soft touch’, these leaders can inadvertently create challenging team dynamics due to their failure to address issues as they arise.

Fence-sitter – indecisive leader:

It is a leader’s job to make decisions, every day. Failure to decide equals leadership failure.

Know-it-all – closed to other ideas:

In an age where adaptability is imperative, there is little patience for these leaders who bask in their own brilliance and fail to consider new ideas or input from others. Successful leaders understand that there is always more to learn and knowledge expansion is an everyday sport.

Guardian – inability to innovate:

To stay ahead, companies must continually look for new opportunities. Innovation is the key to business growth and new markets. Leaders who fail to innovate put the role and their organisation at risk.

Micromanager – management on a leash:

A derailer that has been around for as long as we can remember. No one wants to be micromanaged.

Poker face – showing no emotion:

These leaders keep people guessing with their non-expressive communication style. Do they agree? Disagree? Have an opinion? Who knows? While not mincing words, these leaders often fail to apply or see the value of nonverbal communication and often have poor working relationships as a result.

People burner – poor people skills:

These leaders are known for burning people wherever they go to get the job done. For some, it is an unintended consequence; others see achievement of the task as the sole imperative. Whatever the driver, this behaviour is unsustainable.

Tactician – poor strategic thinker:

In our constantly changing global village, thinking ahead to inform the actions of today is paramount. Leaders without this essential skill will stifle their leadership potential and their organisation's success.

As you read through the derailers we are sure you could quickly identify people you know, probably even people in your team. We know that the outward behaviours associated with each derailer are symptomatic of good intentions, poorly executed.

In this book we systematically unpack each derailer. Firstly, we build awareness of the problems associated with each derailer by using a brief scenario to illustrate the commonly seen behaviours and their impacts.

We then consider the underlying positive motivation driving the unresourceful behaviours. We have identified the drivers that we most commonly see, but if it is not one of these, then simply asking: 'What is

most important to you in this situation/project/role/your career?’ is helpful to elicit the positive intention driving your direct report’s poor behaviour.

Once your direct report’s intentions are understood then your work commences in earnest. To assist you in establishing a framework for success we have included a snapshot of the latest theory, as well as coaching questions that we regularly use to support behaviour change.

The coaching tips are specific to the derailer under consideration. However, if you are looking for some questions that can be useful irrespective of the context, then check out the Wild Card section towards the back of the book.

As well as providing a specific framework to work through each derailer, we have provided a standard performance discussion framework that will help you to provide targeted coaching in any development conversation. If you are keen to put into practice your ‘Leader as Coach’ skills, this book will help you hone those skills so you can build your coaching capability while developing others – everybody wins!

Now that you know the high-level approach, it’s time to begin.

Micromanager

management on a leash

“When the boss is away, work becomes a holiday.”
Portuguese proverb

Micromanagement suffocates. Paradoxically, too much care increases the manager’s workload and stress, and diminishes the productivity of the team. Allowing autonomy increases engagement and frees up management capacity.

She says

Things are under review.

She thinks

If I want it done now, I have to do it myself.
I need to be sure this is right.
People need constant feedback.
Due diligence is important.

He thinks

The team's productivity is reduced.
Absenteeism is rising.
People are feeling suffocated.
She's not developing her team.



Her intention

Raise the standard through quality output.

360 feedback

- She assigns us work and then constantly interferes.
- My seven-year-old gets more scope to choose the way he works than we do here!
- Returning work back with red scribbles all over it (again!) is not the way to motivate a professional team.
- Working with Mary is like working in a cartoon about micromanagement!
- She doesn't trust anyone but herself.
- She has no idea of the skills of her team or how to use them.
- Time for me to find somewhere else where I can stretch myself.
- She over-engineers things and then insists that I follow the process she has developed.
- I think she means well but her need to be 'diligent' is blocking our progress.



DISCOVER – what’s the problem?

Chris knew his wife wouldn’t be happy – the networking function with the board had gone much longer than he expected and he was very late leaving. He walked past Mary’s office not surprised to see her bent over her desk.

Mary was looking so tired recently, and seemed to be very bogged down in the work of the department. She had a team of young and keen marketers. Each one had a strong resumé and good track record, and yet she didn’t seem able to trust them to do their work without supervision.

As he drove home, Chris realised that since Mary had taken over, the whole team seemed to have lost the energy and buzz he had come to expect from the marketing department. Mary seemed overwhelmed and the team seemed to be rapidly losing motivation. He was also starting to get complaints from other departments waiting on outstanding work and unable move forward without Mary’s contribution.

DECODE – what’s the cause?

MARY

Producing a quality outcome is very important to Mary. She focuses on maintaining control of the work to ensure that the desired standard is reached. Despite providing clear instructions on how things need to be done, she often finds that to guarantee good work she needs to provide constant feedback and check all outputs at least twice.

Mary has heard some of the team say she is a micromanager, but she shrugs that off. After all, she doesn’t want to be working so late! It’s just the price she has to pay to make sure the job is done well. She is becoming frustrated because it seems that the more specific feedback she gives about the required improvements, the less effort her team are putting in, and the more mistakes she is finding in their work.

Mary's intention is to raise the standard of the department by ensuring 100 per cent quality deliverables. Due diligence is important to her in ensuring a solid outcome of the highest quality. She's often heard saying that things are "under review".

The unintended consequence of her approach is lack of development in her team. Her concern for high standards is being perceived as lack of trust, and so they no longer feel empowered to make things happen. Her peers around the leadership table see her as inflexible, one even commenting on her 'paranoia'.

Mary herself is starting to feel the pressure of letting others down and is worried that she might not be doing this job as well as she had hoped. Getting this promotion was a big break for her and she desperately wants to do well. She wonders if maybe she just needs to work harder?

CHRIS

Chris knows that Mary means well, and in other roles her constant need to thoroughly check the work of others would be an asset. It's just not an asset for the Director of Marketing! Right now her micromanagement was impacting on Chris through Mary's reduction in productivity from the marketing department. This was costing Mary personally, and seemed to be having a serious impact on the morale of the marketing team. He had even noticed that for the first time ever, marketing showed on the monthly absentee report.

Chris was beginning to question his decision to move Mary into this role. She had been such an excellent marketing analyst, and yet Chris knew the CEO was beginning to doubt Mary's ability to shine in this role.

TEAM

Mary's team experience her as a 'micromanager' at best, and a 'control freak' at worst, reporting that she allocates work and then interferes with getting it done. Some more flexible members of the team initially

gave her the benefit of doubt, thinking she would relax a bit once she settled into her new role. But that hasn't happened. They perceive her as a bottleneck – because she needs to review and approve all work, everything is held up on Mary's desk and it has become almost impossible to meet deadlines.

People have stopped trying to defend their work and demonstrate to Mary that a different way is possible. It seems that only Mary's way can be trusted. One person in the team cheekily says he loves working with Mary because he now 'switches off' and does the minimum, knowing that Mary will take over and finish it anyway regardless of what he does!

SOME POSSIBLE CAUSES

Low trust

Trusting in the people you work with enables autonomy. Failing to trust damages relationships and ultimately the productivity of the team.

A leader with low trust may treat each circumstance as a new event and will test it as if for the first time, leading to frustration in their team. This leader may also lack trust in their own capabilities.

High detailed focus

The higher the level, the broader the focus needed. As a leader progresses up the corporate ladder, less detail and more big-picture thinking is required. A leader who is motivated to work sequentially through tasks and/or take a detailed approach can appear to be micromanaging. This leader may prefer to work from the bottom up and focus on the individual details that make up the whole.

This leader could appear to be focusing energy on things that are not strategically important, or seeking involvement in everything so they feel across the topic. This leader may also find delegation challenging, as they may feel uncomfortable letting go of the detailed knowledge.

Insistence on overly high standards

As a leader, the performance of the team matters at least as much as her own. A leader who is focused on overly high standards may take over the work of others to ensure that those high standards are maintained.

The desire for recognition of the results they have achieved may also drive micromanaging behaviours. Their high standards for themselves and others may result in them driving themselves too hard, being reluctant to delegate and suffering burn out. Their team members may even feel bullied.

Need for control

Balancing control with releasing control is a paradox of leadership. A leader who holds tightly onto control risks increasing their own anxiety while disempowering their people. A leader with an excessive need to be in charge could be viewed by others as demanding, dominating and/or directive.

A high need for control will foster micromanagement and thwart the ability to delegate due to the belief that no one can do the job as well as they do. This will often translate into high workloads and a struggle to achieve work-life balance.

Perfectionist

The quest for 'perfect' and the rejection of anything less, is a dangerous game for a leader to play. In most contexts, a leader who sets unachievable standards risks disappointment for themselves and their team. Effective leaders realise that 'failure' is a learning opportunity and perfectionism impedes progress.

The need for perfectionism can be driven by things like a fear of getting things wrong, not being good enough, or the feeling of being an imposter.

DESIGN – what’s the action?

SNAPSHOT OF CURRENT THINKING

Micromanagement is readily found in organisations globally. The negative impacts on employee morale are so intense that micromanagement is among the top three reasons employees resign.⁷³ In a 2013 Australian Employee Engagement Survey⁷⁴, 38 per cent of professionals who responded did not agree with the statement “my manager helps me perform at my best”. Tony Gleeson, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Institute of Management Victoria and Tasmania, believes the survey result is largely due to micro managers. “Some people won’t like this but I actually think micromanagement is worse for an organisation than having no management at all,” he says.

Micromanagement causes employees to feel inept and creates disengagement. They fail to focus on their work, and their lack of motivation and productivity can be contagious amongst their colleagues. Micromanagement tells an employee that you don’t trust their judgment or work. It is also costly, according to the book *Twelve: The Elements of Great Managing*⁷⁵, that states: “Disengagement-driven turnover costs most sizeable businesses millions every year”. Contrast this with Gallup research cited in the book that finds that engaged teams average 18 per cent higher productivity and 12 per cent higher profitability than less engaged teams.

According to MindTools⁷⁶, and validated by our own experience, “Micromanagers often affirm the value of their approach with a simple experiment: They give an employee an assignment, and then disappear until the deadline.” The employee is unlikely to perform well under these circumstances, especially if they have lost confidence as a result of being micromanaged until now.

The micromanager will use this result as evidence to support their view that their input is required. As observed by MindTools, “Micromanagers

prevent employees from making, and taking responsibility for, their own decisions. But it's precisely the process of making decisions, and living with the consequences, that causes people to grow and improve."

COACHING TIPS TO MINIMISE MICROMANAGEMENT

Increase trust

- Giving the person the benefit of the doubt, what is the minimum amount of supervision you need to provide? Now halve this and see what happens.
- When in the past did you take too long to trust, and that lack of trust limited the development of a relationship? What did you learn that you can apply now?
- What assumptions could you make that would allow you to trust now and empower this person?
- Play the trust game both ways and share information about what you are up to, especially if it might be relevant to what your team is doing.
- Resist checking up on your team. Instead of asking whether they've finished a task, try asking questions like, "What do you need to get this project done?" or "Is anything getting in your way?"
- Rather than assuming they need your help to get it right, ask, "What do you need from me to get this done?"
- When assigning a task, establish clear milestones and delivery standards to avoid the need for regular checking. Then leave people to get the job done.
- How do you feel when you are under constant surveillance? What impact would this have on your motivation at work?
- If this saying were true: "The more you use the reins, the less they'll use their brains", how would you adjust your leadership style to use less reins?

Reduce detail focus

- What are the essential concepts you need to focus on to communicate the priorities effectively?
- How can you trust you have all the detail you need already so that you can step back, loosen the reins and allow the person to get on with the task?
- The Pareto principle states that 80 per cent of the effects come from 20 per cent of the causes. If the detail of 80 per cent of your work won't matter, what's the 20 per cent you need to focus on?
- As a person becomes more senior in an organisation, with broader responsibilities and competing demands on their time, they typically become less detailed and more big picture. What detail do you need to let go of to move from being a technician to a leader?
- Understand that you can present the overview, knowing that your audience will ask when they need more information.
- Formulate ideas in headlines and bullet points rather than sentences.
- What is the current cost to you of working continually with this level of detail? Consider the cost personally, for your team and for the organisation.
- Act as if you didn't need any of the detail, and allow your team members to know it. You know where to find them if you need them.

Choose an appropriate standard

- 100 per cent is not always required. What is the minimum standard appropriate for this situation? Manage to that standard and no more.
- What development opportunities is your team missing out on by you not sharing the work and the limelight?
- Consider the judgments you make about those who don't hold the same standards as you. Could these decisions be limiting

you? What would be possible for you if you accepted they are still getting the results in spite of their standards?

- What impact could you make if you were to step back and lead from behind?
- Try out three other ways to get the work done and done well.
- How can you maintain and develop your identity as a leader while stepping back and letting others step up?
- What if you were diagnosed with an addiction to crisis, escalated stress and increased pressure? What would you do differently to address the impact of your addiction?

Relax the need for control

- Describe the impact on your current role or project if you were 20 per cent less focused on being in control and more focused on building collaboration and harmony within the team.
- What is the cost to you of putting your need for control ahead of the relationships and people connections?
- What could be freed up if you focused on establishing roles, responsibilities, accountability and expectations, and then left your team to get on with delivering to that?
- How are you hiding behind confusion and lack of role clarity? Could it be that this creates an environment for overly tight control from you?
- Approach this project with a 'beginner's mind' and explore being innocent of knowledge, taking interest in learning from what others know.
- What do you fear might happen if you to release control? Put mitigations in place and try it out.
- If you had to leave your role next week, what would be the essential things that your team would need to know from you to continue

moving forward? Try providing just that level of direction and notice the job gets done anyway without so much input from you.

Banish the perfectionist

- What would you do if it were not possible for you or your team to fail? How would you lead this current project?
- How would you approach this if you believed that it was okay to fail, because failure will offer you and your team new learning to succeed next time?
- Think about a particular time when you were willing to risk failure. In your imagination, travel back through time to that place. Notice how you hold your body and how you breathe. Bring that feeling back to now and allow yourself to let go of the need for perfection in this instance.
- Imagine that everything you do is a lesson delivered to build your competency. 'Failure' is okay as it provides learning for success next time. Practise this mindset.
- Think about something you do where 'near enough is good enough'. Notice your inner dialogue – how do you speak to yourself? Apply this to the current situation.
- Imagine that success requires five failures, so the faster you fail the faster you would succeed. What would you do differently?

SUMMARY

- Engagement is undermined.
- The prevailing perception is that staff are not trusted.
- The direct report's driving intention is to maintain high standards.
- Possible drivers? They may have low trust; a high need for detail; an insistence on overly high standards; a reluctance to release control or are a perfectionist.

Poker face *showing no emotion*

**“Your face is a book,
where men may read strange matters.”
William Shakespeare**

There's a parallel world of communication if only you tune into it. Communication is way more than the spoken word. Relying too heavily on just the words can mean you miss valuable data and are misconstrued by your peers.

She says

People should choose their words carefully.

She thinks

Words matter.

People should choose their words carefully.

Emotion doesn't belong at work.

Let's keep it rational.

I say what I mean and mean what I say.

He thinks

She's disconnected from her stakeholders.

She appears cold and aloof.

She can't read the room.

Everything is black or white with her.



Her intention

Accurate communication.

360 feedback

- I can never tell what she is thinking. I don't trust her.
- She doesn't take a hint. She is so literal. You have to be really specific with what you want or she just doesn't get it.
- I am so overwhelmed with work and she just doesn't seem to notice or care.
- Mary is very unemotional. She can't connect on a personal level.
- She's a hard worker, but seems a bit aloof.
- Mary is very controlled. While on one level I respect that, I just wish she would show some emotion so we know she is human.
- Mary misses the mood of one of our key stakeholders. There have been a number of situations that could have exploded if I were not there to ease the situation.
- She's like a machine, hearing what we say but not really getting it. She needs an emotional translator!



DISCOVER – what’s the problem?

Chris watched the interaction from his office. It was Mary and Simon in another discussion. He could see that Simon was getting more and more frustrated as Mary remained cool. He waited for the inevitable complaint to arrive.

Simon burst into Chris’s office. “I just can’t work with her! She’s so hard to read and she just doesn’t get it.” He couldn’t understand why Mary wouldn’t acknowledge what was going on. The team was not on board with the changes and yet when Mary checked in with them they all offered up their verbal support. Mary took them at their word and didn’t see what was really going on. It was so obvious to Simon – the body language, the tone of voice, the eye contact, but Mary just didn’t pick it up.

DECODE – what’s the cause?

MARY

Mary is someone who values straight talk. She is focused on the meaning of the words, believing that is the key to real understanding. Her face is often expressionless and she doesn’t see the value in emotive communication. She is sometimes accused of not ‘getting it’, whatever ‘it’ is.

Mary is often heard saying things like, “Choose your words carefully” or asking, “What’s in the fine print?”. She is also known in the department for her mantra: “The workplace is no place for emotions”.

Mary’s intention is to communicate as accurately as possible and being very deliberate about her vocabulary choice is the best way she knows how to do that. She knows that emotions can cloud judgment, so she ensures that her own mood is constant and discourages others from being emotional at work.

The unintended consequence of being such a literal communicator is that she often misses important nonverbal cues from others. She fails to read the subtext of a situation and misses hints from those who communicate more inferentially through facial expressions, tonality and body language in general. Her reliance on the spoken words rather than the way they are communicated means she is often misjudged as aloof, reserved and even cold. People find her hard to read and hard to connect with as a result.

CHRIS

Chris knows that Mary is misunderstood. He observes a disconnection between her and key stakeholders. He notices that it takes a long time for people to get to know her, and for Mary to develop influence. As a presenter, Mary's mono-tonal voice quickly sends audiences to sleep. Colleagues have complained that she is pedantic in communication, often correcting others on what has been said.

Chris also knows that Mary struggles to read the room and pick up on subtle cues in the communication. It is costing her but Mary can't see it. Mary is unintentionally putting people offside and people don't trust her because they can't tell what she is thinking.

Chris often observes Mary's team members scowling or sighing in exasperation after an interaction with her. She has a tendency to be black and white. Her clients prefer to deal with her team members than go directly to her because they feel she isn't welcoming.

On top of that, she is developing a bad reputation as a result, which is unfair because she is a good person who works hard.

TEAM

Mary's team experience her as cold, unemotional and disconnected from them. They know she is skilled and good at her job but some members believe she never notices when they are stressed or struggling

and therefore doesn't care enough offer to help or support. Even when they drop hints about what's going on, she seems oblivious or unwilling to acknowledge the real situation. It feels like she just doesn't care.

When they put proposals to her, they find it challenging to interpret whether they have hit the mark. Some members of the team feel she is negatively judging them.

SOME POSSIBLE CAUSES

Missing nonverbal cues

Communication is more than just words. Understanding the complete intended message is as much about hearing the words as it is about noticing and interpreting the way those words are delivered.

When leaders tune in to the content of the message (words only), they can miss the all-important subtext that is often communicated through nonverbal channels including facial expressions, tonality and body language. Without the subtext to fill in the gaps in communication, leaders are in danger of missing vital cues about what is really going on, as so much of communication occurs through inference from these non-verbal channels. This also affects their ability to build rapport with others, as rapport requires an ability to notice and respond to nonverbal cues, among other things.

Unexpressive communication

Communication requires signposting along the way. Clear communication involves an ability to let others know how the communication is progressing.

Effective leaders signal to those they speak with that they are listening, paying attention and processing the communication. They use nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, nodding and body language. These cues provide the signals required for others to feel heard and understood.

When leaders fail to provide these important communication cues others can misjudge them as being uninterested, uncaring or just not 'getting it'.

DESIGN – what's the action?

SNAPSHOT OF CURRENT THINKING

Communication is central to the success of every organisation. Failures in organisations and relationships can always be traced back to a failure to communicate.⁷⁷

Daniel Goleman, who popularised the concepts of emotional intelligence and social intelligence, states, "When it comes to leadership, or success more broadly in many of our endeavors – what you achieve depends on *everyone else being effective*, so you need to be successful by influencing, persuading, developing, growing, inspiring and motivating other people. That's the social intelligence ability. It requires empathy and it requires skilled interaction."⁷⁸

It is not just what you say and how you say it, but also how well you have understood the social context. Matthew Lieberman at UCLA also made the important discovery that we are wired for connection and so therefore, when not engaged in a task, our social brain is actively engaged scanning our environment and preparing for our next social interaction.⁷⁹ An even more important finding from this study was that the analytical brain (pre-frontal cortex) and the social brain, represented through a series of structures in the midline of the brain, do not operate simultaneously. When one is on, the other is off, creating a neural see-saw. So in order to be holistic in our communication we need to be adept in switching in and out of these thinking centres to assess both the verbal and nonverbal cues.

Scientific studies have also discovered that humans make judgments about a person's trustworthiness within the first 500 milliseconds of

hearing their voice. The psychologists from the universities of Glasgow, Scotland and Princeton in the US, have shown that a simple “Hello” is sufficient to allow most people to draw conclusions about personality type, even without seeing the person to whom they are speaking.⁸⁰ The findings of the study suggests that the tone of voice that you use when you say “Hello” directly informs the first impression of you made by the person to whom you are speaking. Dr Phil McAleer, from the Voice Neurocognition Laboratory, University of Glasgow, who led the study, states: “It is amazing that from such short bursts of speech you can get such a definite impression of a person. And more so that, irrespective of whether it is accurate, your impression is the same as what the other listeners get. It is perhaps also consistent that we are most attuned to recognising signs of trustworthiness and dominance, two traits that would have been central to our survival as we evolved.”

Carol Kinsey Goman, author of *The Silent Language of Leaders: How Body Language Can Help — or Hurt — How You Lead* states there are two sets of signals a person gives off.⁸¹ The first signal is one of status and authority; the next gives off warmth and empathy. Kinsey Goman offers a range of tips for successful collaboration, and here are three that are relevant for Poker Face:

1. **Activate your smile power.** A smile can tell others how approachable, cooperative and trustworthy you are.
2. **Use your head.** Kinsey Goman found people speak more if “the listener nods in clusters of three at regular intervals”. Tilting your head also shows you are involved and interested.
3. **Look at people when they speak.** People will feel like they have your attention as long as you’re making eye contact. Avoid being distracted by phones or other people.

As leaders move from being transactional to transformational, the ability to influence others has become increasingly more important.

There is a body of research however that supports the notion that more expressive communication is more effective when we are seeking to be persuasive. In the *Harvard Business Review* article, ‘Learning Charisma’, the researchers identify three nonverbal cues that are key to charisma: expressions of voice, body and face. While they don’t come naturally to all, they are highly effective for showing passion and winning over listeners.

1. **Animated voice.** People who are passionate vary the volume and emotions they communicate through their speech. They also use pauses for conveying control.
2. **Facial expressions.** Helping to reinforce your message, facial expressions help listeners to see as well as hear your message. Eye contact is key.
3. **Gestures.** Like listening signposts, hand gestures can be used to reinforce emotion or to draw attention at different points of the communication.

We think Kinsey Goman summarises the concept of effective communication well when she states, “There’s no good or bad body language signal.” Rather, she suggests that it depends on what your message is as to whether your body language supports or sabotages the message.

COACHING TIPS TO INCREASE EXPRESSION IN COMMUNICATION

Learning to read nonverbal cues

- Interview someone who is good at building rapport easily with others. Ask them what nonverbal cues they watch for and how they respond when they see them. Choose one nonverbal signal for a week to observe and implement into your communication.
- When your team member’s body language does not align with their words consider what questions you could ask to build your understanding of their true perspective?

- It is widely accepted that nonverbal communication accounts for a significant portion of the meaning of the message. What vital information might you have missed through overlooking nonverbal cues?
- Watch TV for 10 minutes with the sound down and notice what understanding you gain without hearing the words. What emotions are being expressed?
- Develop your ability to recognise facial expressions and their meanings through specialised training in micro-expressions.
- Develop your understanding and recognition of the nonverbal cues of others by reading materials on body language. Focus on observing these cues in your workplace.
- How does your professional training influence you to focus more on the content and less on the nonverbal cues of others? How could you expand your search for 'data' beyond the words to the nonverbal signals of others?

Being more expressive

- How would a more expressive approach in the delivery of your message enhance your outcomes?
- What is the culture of your workplace? How accepted is the expression of emotions and feelings generally? What does this mean for building relationships with others?
- What level of animation was appropriate in your home growing up? How is this impacting your current communication in the workplace?
- What could you do differently to be more emotionally 'visible' to others? What will you attempt this week?
- Have someone video you as you communicate with others. Replaying the video, notice what expressions are showing on your face and through your body movements and hand gestures.

What else could you incorporate in order to convey your message without using words?

- When practising being more expressive, use bigger expressions and gestures than you feel comfortable with and notice the positive response you get. Even though you may be uncomfortable, others may be pleasantly surprised at how engaged you appear to them. The more you do this, the easier it gets.
- Identify a colleague or friend who is good at nonverbal communication. Ask them to observe you and provide specific real-time feedback about your nonverbal signalling.

SUMMARY

- Emotions are hard to read.
- The prevailing perception is that they are cold and hard to connect with.
- The direct report's driving intention is to focus on what is said, not how it's said.
- Possible drivers? They may miss nonverbal cues or use limited facial expressions.

Great leaders develop their people

Are you in a leadership role where your people are also leaders?

Do you want to...

- understand what's really driving the dysfunctional behaviours you observe?
- become a catalyst for behaviour change that sticks?
- take the guesswork out of developing your direct reports?

Written for leaders who lead leaders, this book addresses the 12 most common, globally recognised leadership derailers:

- **Staller** – analysis paralysis
- **Controller** – command and control
- **Cyclone** – bull at a gate
- **Doer** – can't delegate
- **Avoider** – conflict averse
- **Fence-sitter** – indecisive leader
- **Know-it-all** – closed to other ideas
- **Guardian** – inability to innovate
- **Micromanager** – management on a leash
- **Poker face** – showing no emotions
- **People burner** – poor people skills
- **Tactician** – poor strategic thinker

Packed with examples, insights and recommendations – and supported by a practical framework – this book will show you how to incorporate strategies specific to the personality types you lead. Great leaders can be created, and this book shows you how.

Leadership experts Corrinne Armour, Anneli Blundell and Belinda Cohen are on a mission to take the guesswork out of developing direct reports.



*"Perhaps the most essential skill of a gifted leader is the ability to cultivate leadership competencies in others. No book is more helpful in this area than **Developing Direct Reports** – outstanding! With lessons both insightful and strategic, the authors brilliantly illuminate the importance of leading others to greatness!"*

Marshall Goldsmith

author or editor of 35 books including the NYT#1 bestselling *Triggers* and global bestsellers *MOJO* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

BHP

Bacca House Press

ISBN 978-0-9942601-1-6

90000>



9 780994 260116