

As a leader, talk is cheap. Action is what counts and practice makes a difference. Below are practical steps to improve performance.

- **When employees feel safe, they want to contribute more.** The key word here is 'want', meaning your people will be choosing to engage with you. Since we know engagement is a characteristic of high-performing teams, this ought to be enough to make you want to improve psychological safety in your organization.
- **Execution and innovation fail when you don't make room for everybody to fully contribute.** When employees lack feelings of psychological safety, they withhold information ranging from mundane to crucial, so the cost of getting this wrong can be substantial.
- **Don't confuse being right or amiable with creating psychological safety.** You might think as a leader that your people like you, but that doesn't automatically mean they feel safe to say things that might really add value or cut across the grain.
- **Get clear about meeting rhythms and relationships.** We're not bumping into each other in the halls as much now that we're working remotely, but that's no excuse for not intentionally developing relationships with the people we need to collaborate with, the people on our team, or the entire organization. Have a town hall in-person or remotely to communicate with your people. More interaction creates more opportunity to create – and capitalize on – psychological safety.
- **Working on active, whole-hearted listening is always valuable.** This is true for any leader at any level, but especially a CEO! People listen to and observe you as you communicate, and that means both speaking AND listening. Become better at listening than speaking.
- **Your body language speaks as much as your words.** LeB gave a great example of this in Episode 48, speaking of the leader whose fist-pounding made others in the room uncomfortable and likely to withdraw from conflict. If your body language isn't in sync with your words, people get mixed messages and psychological safety erodes.
- **Forging ahead in a meeting without psychological safety means you very likely won't have all the data.** If your goal is to make more data-driven decisions, then you're going to have to find a way to create more psychological safety to get that data.

Let's Get Practical

The Critical Role of Psychological Safety

Episode 48

- **Find ways to level the playing field and remove any hierarchy barriers that exist.** If anyone in the room is holding back because stated or unstated hierarchy norms imply that only senior people in the room can speak, psychological safety will be hindered. Understand that removing hierarchy barriers requires not just intentionally stating that you, the CEO, want people to contribute. It also may require you assuming a lesser seat at the table, removing the jacket and tie, and anything else that might be a visual or verbal nod to your position.
- **Know the makeup of your people so you can best invite them to participate.** Relationships build trust, and trust is at the core of psychological safety. If you want to improve it in any business discussion, get to know your people better. Recognize they're all different, so you're going to have to invite them to participate and engage them differently. If you try to engage everyone the same way, you'll inevitably do it wrong and hurt your psychological safety.
- **This is meaningful, impactful, and challenging work.** Creating psychological safety for the people in your organization is some of the more challenging yet rewarding work there is to be done in your culture. You need to know this going in, but the payoff is worth it.

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