

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

- ❑ **Befriend your frustration.** Pay attention to what's frustrating you because it's telling you something important. Rather than avoid, ignore, or be frozen by what's bothering you, embrace and analyze it to get to the root of the issue. That root will tell you where to begin.
- ❑ **Identify your growing edge.** Dr. Tom O'Connor spoke in Episode 62 about your growing edge, that thing you'd like to be better at than you are today. What could you learn that would alleviate frustrations? Who do you admire who can do something you can't? We all have a list of things we wish we could do better, and the frustrations you identified in the bullet point above will help you prioritize it.
- ❑ **Get a coach to help you succeed.** Ideally, if the first two points above resonated with you, find an experienced coach who understands them and can help you be successful in doing that.
- ❑ **Practice, practice, practice!** No new skills are developed without intentional practice, and the skills above are no different. Be deliberate in your approach to learning and implementing them. Practice, consistently gather feedback on your development, then adjust your approach until you master these new skills.
- ❑ **Learn the value of evocation.** Evocation is one of the Core Values at Tom's company, Transforming Communication, and is a beautiful concept to learn and implement. Evocation means drawing something out of someone, helping them give birth to an idea or a thought. It enables someone to express themselves rather than you driving your own ideas or thoughts into them.
- ❑ **Inquire into discord when you have it.** Conflict and discord are part of every business that has people in it, and yours is no exception. When these occur, don't ignore them, but rather see them as an opportunity for dialogue and evocation. Use good dialogue statements like "Tell me more." or "Help me understand."
- ❑ **Let go of the "Train and Pray" model.** Too often, we coach or train someone and pray it works rather than provide ongoing support and reinforcement to ensure the training works and lasts. How often have you attended a great motivational day of training only to

Let's Get Practical

Building Stronger Teams through Dialogue

Episode 62: Interview with Dr. Tom O'Connor

forget most of it before you can apply and reinforce what you heard? It happens far more often than you'd think, and there are better ways to help your people learn and grow.

- **Being adaptive is valuable.** This bullet is just a teaser for a deeper conversation about Adaptive Leadership we have with Tom in Episode 63: Adaptive Leadership. For now, just know that adaptive leadership enables you to handle and resolve complex issues in new and innovative ways that are often right under your nose but difficult to see.
- **It's essential to nurture each other.** Episode 62 centers around the use of dialogue to build stronger teams. What makes dialogue unique is that it often places greater emphasis on the relationships and the people in the conversation than it does on the issues being discussed. Furthering the relationships is the primary function of dialogue, so it's essential to nurture each other in the process.
- **Make it safe for dialogue.** We've spoken much in this space on the importance of psychological safety; that is creating an environment where whatever needs to be said can safely and respectfully be said. Just like nurturing relationships is essential for good dialogue, so is psychological safety. We just can't emphasize this enough.
- **Spend conscious time together.** Be with what is. Check in with each other about what's going well and what help is needed. With an emphasis on being intentional and inclusive with each other, dialogue will thrive. And when dialogue thrives, your business wins.
- **Use your own practices with yourself.** It's the story of the Cobbler's kids who have no shoes, one where organizations spend so much time taking care of their customers that they forget to take care of themselves and their own people. As consultants, we've seen numerous organizations fail to care for themselves, and it rarely produces good outcomes.

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