

# *Leaders Who Ask*

Building a Fearless Culture by telling less  
and asking more

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Each person holds so much power within themselves that needs to be let out. Sometimes they just need a little nudge, a little direction, a little support, a little coaching, and the greatest things can happen.

Peter 'Clay' Carroll,  
American National Football League Coach



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## What is happening?

There is low engagement in your organisation; no one is taking accountability, and the leader is unskilled or too scared to fix it ... soul destroying, isn't it?

- Is there untapped potential across your organisation?
- Are your leaders building engaged and productive teams?
- Or are they stuck in expert mode, solving all the problems themselves rather than empowering and developing their teams and building Fearless Cultures?

As I move between a diverse range of organisations across multiple sectors, I see leaders working hard (perhaps too hard) and yet struggling to achieve their own potential, unable to unlock the potential of their teams, and holding back your desired organisational culture. That's a lot of wasted effort.

Leadership matters. We know it matters inside the organisation because we have all experienced good and bad leadership. Leadership matters externally too. When stock market analysts are valuing public companies, part of what they are looking at is the quality of leadership in the organisation. **A study by Deloitte<sup>1</sup> calculated a leadership premium of up to 15.7%. This means that when you are under good leadership, there is a boost—to your share price – of almost 16%.** And of course the opposite is also true: there's a 16% hit on your share price for poor leadership.

Let's empower leaders to be brave enough and skilled enough to connect deeply, lead fearlessly and achieve serious results. Let's build leadership. Let's build Fearless Cultures.

<sup>1</sup>The leadership premium: How companies win the confidence of investors, Deloitte, March 2012, page 7.

# Why is it happening?

## Being a leader feels like hard work

As leaders, we feel we are constantly telling people what to do. It seems there is never a time when someone is not waiting for us to solve a problem or provide an instruction on what's next. It's tiring; it keeps us stuck in the day to day and prevents us from doing anything strategic. The weight of leading a team—whether it's 10 people or 10,000—can be heavy.

Sometimes we feel the responsibility of having to 'know' everything and as leaders, we can get anxious if we don't have all the answers.

Our ability to communicate with and engage our team directly impacts its success. The team meeting is a common way to meet this need. But many leaders struggle to run an effective meeting, creating instead a monologue better suited to inducing sleep than shared purpose.

And then there's those crucial performance conversations—the ones we put off. We stew on what to say, how to say it, and how the team will respond. Perhaps there are people in your team who need some extra support. Providing development feedback can be hard and thankless work especially when there is no shift in behaviour or outcomes.

All this can translate into sleepless nights.

Would you like a way to empower your people to solve problems themselves? What if you didn't need all the answers? Would you like a way to prepare less for meetings, and yet have more engaging conversations and better outcomes? How would it be to feel more confident in performance conversations?

## Staff engagement is patchy

**Maybe your organisation is growing rapidly**, and that's exciting, right? You are all doing great work, and the customer is valuing what you are delivering. But with expansion comes risk and signs of organisational growing pains are showing. Old ways of communicating are not working so well and with greater size and complexity and it's becoming harder to keep messages consistent.

**Maybe your organisation isn't growing; it's been around for a while and the legacy of history is slowing things down.** The annual staff engagement survey shows that engagement scores are still low, despite the actions to address this. (And you didn't need a survey to tell you that anyway, did you?) Leaders are not connected with their teams: they are giving direction but not providing inspiration, so people are feeling stuck and lacking in purpose.

**Problems may be simmering under the surface**, and your leaders are unwilling or unable to identify the issues. They don't have the confidence to surface tensions and lack the framework to respond. When problems arise, these leaders are firefighting rather than being proactive in building team culture.

It's important to retain what is great about your organisational culture and leadership style, and be ready to embrace alternative ways of communicating, operating and leading.

## Leadership bench-strength is lacking

In a 2013 Australian Employee Engagement Survey <sup>2</sup>, **38% of the 2,223 professionals who responded did not agree with the statement 'my manager helps me perform at my best'**. There's something wrong with this picture, and I don't think it's changed much in the few years since.

While their intentions might be good, performance conversations don't happen outside the annual performance review process. (And even then, most of the conversations are simply to tick the box.)

There will be **some leaders in your organisation who believe in the value of regular feedback**. They devote time and effort to the annual process but their conversations are not effective. They are unskilled to have real development conversations on the job, when it counts, and opportunities are missed. Staff are left feeling they are not progressing and that there is no investment in their development.

When people feel undervalued, undeveloped, and disconnected with organisational purpose, they may let you know by leaving.

## The results aren't there

**Team performance across the organisation is inconsistent** with some teams not delivering on expectations, and there is a lack of individual and team accountability. The team leader is blaming a lack of ability to hit KPIs on the quality of people in the team and appears unable to turn this around.

In many organisations, especially where there is a strong professional expertise (such as hospitals, law firms, engineering practices), **GMs have reached the level they are at through excellent technical skills and willingness to hard work**.

But now they are struggling to engage. They are working too hard, driven by the need to control processes and people, but still not getting results. Their primary expertise in (say) medicine, does not mean they will automatically have a secondary expertise in leadership. We need to help them with that.

## Our culture is far from Fearless

What would be possible when your leaders give up needing to control people and situations, and instead have the skills and confidence needed to conduct the crucial yet sometimes uncomfortable conversations?

Leadership is tricky. It's challenging and rewarding, and at times, it's fun. Building culture is tricky too, but it starts and ends with leadership. **Adding coaching skills to the toolkits of our leaders makes them brave enough to connect deeply, lead fearlessly, and achieve transformational results**—laying down the pathway to a Fearless Culture.

A key responsibility of leadership is developing others, and yet your leaders are not growing their people.

<sup>2</sup>74. James, C. (2014, January 21). How to manage a micro manager. The Sydney Morning Herald. Retrieved November 13, 2014, from <http://www.smh.com.au/small-business/managing/how-to-manage-a-micro-manager-20131211-2z5cx.html>. Study of 2223 professionals.

# Building a Fearless Culture

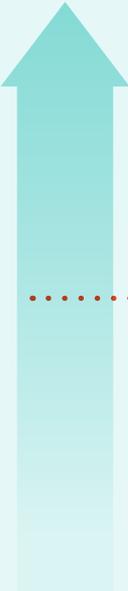
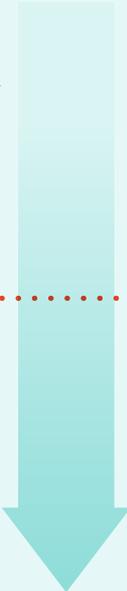
## Leaders Who Ask - Ladder to a Fearless Culture

Building a Fearless Culture doesn't happen overnight. In fact, it doesn't happen very often, and when it does it's the result of the cumulative focus of the leaders across the organisation.

So let's have a look at those leaders through the lens of their coaching focus.

Imagine a ladder, and like most ladders, we start our journey at the bottom.

### Leaders Who Ask build Fearless Cultures

		CULTURE	LEADER	LEADER'S ASK vs TELL FOCUS	TEAM PRODUCTIVITY
Increasing Return  Increasing Cost 		Fearless	Leader Who Asks	Skillful	x5
		Engaged	Committed	Consistent	x3
		Connected	Present	Inconsistent	x2
		Functioning	Distracted	Aware	x1
		Disengaged	Indifferent	Dissenting	x-2

Before we start, let's be very clear: we are talking about the leader's **coaching focus and skill, not technical skill**. You, and most of your leaders, will be highly competent in your technical skill set. Your technical skill set was probably a major contribution to promotion to a leadership role but it is unlikely to be a key factor in success at the leadership level.

A leader's primary skill set might be accounting, nursing, design or law, and for each the secondary skill set is leadership. In this paper, we will focus on the secondary skill set and will explore the leader's skill in the nuances of connecting with, engaging, and developing their team members.



## The Indifferent Leader

The **Indifferent** Leader (and really I am using the term 'leader' here for consistency, and not because this group of people have earned that title) does not engage in a coaching focus at all. They may be completely unaware of the possibility, or they may be **DISSENTING** from a coaching focus. Full Stop!

This leader may never have had the opportunity to experience or learn a coaching approach, or it could be something they have heard of and just plain disagree with. *'It's quicker and more effective to tell people what to do. After all, we pay them to do a job.'* The culture of teams lead by an indifferent leader are **Disengaged**, and not surprisingly team productivity is low, perhaps at cost to the business.



### Meet Jessica, the Indifferent Leader

Quick witted, a strong strategic thinker, technically gifted, and highly ambitious, Jessica attained her first senior

leadership position in her early 30s. Those close to her believed she had the ability to reach CEO level, and yet few believed she would. A recent staff survey indicated that Jessica's team was disengaged, with few believing that she cared about them, or that she was willing to personally invest in their development. Her executive team experienced her as competitive, untrusting and needing to be in control.

For her part, Jessica was frustrated with the stagnating skill level of her team, its lack of willingness to take accountability for individual and team results, and its reluctance to put in any discretionary effort. She worked

long hours to get good results, and she could not understand why her team was not willing to do the same.

Jessica was an Indifferent Leader. She was uninterested in adopting a coaching approach. Her primary leadership style was directive and impersonal, and left her people unsure of their performance or how to improve.

Her success to date resulted from ambition and hard work, high IQ and an almost Machiavellian approach to leadership. It wasn't that she was deliberately controlling and disempowering, Jessica simply didn't appreciate the importance of connecting with people, and the value of a coaching approach overlaid on her existing leadership style.

Indifferent Leaders are dissenting towards a coaching approach. They may:

- be very competent technically
- have a strong and inflexible leadership style that does not include coaching
- focus on commanding rather than building rapport
- deliberately disregard the need for asking, instead telling their people what to do
- have a weak leadership style and weak technical skills
- have a low care for people, or a lack of ability to express the care they have
- be a new leader and are learning the ropes of leadership

Or they may be like Jessica, simply unaware of the alternatives.

Whatever the 'cause', this leader is indifferent to the value of coaching skills and their team is likely to be unproductive and disengaged. Absenteeism could be a problem in this team. Or worse, 'presenteeism', where people have checked out and yet still come to work each day.

Indifferent leaders are a big risk to organisational culture. The Dale Carnegie Institute estimate that 'reactions to him or her explain 84% of how employees feel about their organization'<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Dale Carnegie Training. (2012). Emotional Drivers of Employee Engagement. [White paper]. Retrieved from [www.prcounts.com/uploads/Emotional\\_Drivers\\_of\\_Employee\\_Engagement.pdf](http://www.prcounts.com/uploads/Emotional_Drivers_of_Employee_Engagement.pdf).



## The Distracted Leader

Next up the ladder we have the **Distracted** Leader. This leader is **AWARE** of a coaching approach but has not yet embraced it. They typically know more is possible from their leadership and are beginning to look for ways to make that happen.

Distracted leaders work hard, yet they are not rewarded with the results they might like or expect. *'I have tried everything to get my people engaged, and nothing works. I am starting to wonder if it's me.'* This wondering might keep them awake at night.



### Meet Jordan, the Distracted Leader

Jordan is the CEO of an aged care provider. He is committed to his team, the residents, the families they support, and to the sector as a whole. His passion fired his long working week, and yet he was exhausted.

Jordan felt like everyone relied on him. He had tried various strategies to get his executive team to take greater ownership and step up, and yet still found himself the 'go to' person for solving problems across the organisation. Others were reluctant to make decisions without endorsement from the CEO.

Jordan was stretched and recognised the need to reduce his operational focus so he had the headspace to focus on the more strategic issues

of organisational growth in a sector undergoing significant change.

He was looking for help, which he thought would come in the form of training and support for his executive team. He also had sufficient self-awareness to begin questioning how his own leadership style could be contributing to the challenges he faced.

Jordan's realisation that it was his own leadership style that was limiting his executive team was a confronting one. His efforts to be supportive were seen as micromanagement. His drive to provide the answers was limiting his team's ability to make mistakes and learn. Worse still, Jordan's behaviour was being modelled by the executives, with a flow on effect through the organisation.

Distracted leaders are aware of their coaching focus and may:

- be very competent technically
- be aware of some coaching skills and are either not confident to use them, or not convinced of the value of applying them
- be observing other leaders building productive and engaged teams, and wondering what their secret is
- be aware that their current approach is not working and be seeking alternatives

Their team will be **Functioning**—certainly not disengaged yet not engaged either. This is a lost opportunity for increasing productivity and developing organisational culture.



## The Present Leader

The **Present** Leader has taken on the challenge and opportunity of a coaching approach, yet is **INCONSISTENT** in the application. This leader is encouraged by the hard measure of increased team productivity and the soft measure of a greater feeling of connection among team members. They invest in focusing on building rapport, strengthening relationships, asking questions that lead to insight, and providing real-time feedback that builds skill and confidence.

Then deadlines loom or a team member is on leave so the pressure increases and the coaching approach is dropped in favor of a directive style. Curt instructions are given, feedback opportunities are missed. Team members, while still feeling connected, are unsure of what to expect from an inconsistent approach to leadership.



### Meet Lola, the Present Leader

On the executive team, Lola has embraced coaching skills to support her approach to leadership. She is conscious of ‘asking’ rather than ‘telling’ when her managers come to her with problems, and her intention is to empower her people. She has always been committed to the concept of continual development and now, with a coaching approach, she has found a way to support this.

Lola recently told me that ‘I am getting some of the best results I have ever got. And I feel as if I am working less. I am just having coaching

conversations.’ Lola is well on her way to becoming a coaching leader.

Feedback from her team indicates that Lola’s coaching approach is still inconsistently applied. She moves unpredictably between leadership styles and her team doesn’t know what version of Lola will show up. This is not surprising as Lola builds new habits to balance a more directive approach to leadership.

With continued focus, Lola will certainly move up the **Leaders Who Ask** Ladder.

The Present Leader has coaching skills in their leadership toolkit and draws on these skills often and yet still inconsistently. They are beginning to see the benefit of a coaching approach on team culture and on productivity. Team members are likely to feel more **Connected** to this leader, and their development needs are considered important; however, the inconsistency of the leader’s style will impact team productivity and morale.

The Present Leader may also be erring on the side of too much coaching by taking a coaching approach when

other tools from their leadership toolkit would be more appropriate.

There is a tipping point here, where the conscious and competent application of coaching skills creates a breakthrough in culture and productivity. This is the invisible line that once crossed, can’t be seen but can be felt by everyone—the line of decreasing cost and increasing return.



## The Committed Leader

The **Committed** Leader is **CONSISTENT** in their application of coaching skills (not that any other leader is not committed to their organisation or to success!). The committed leader's aspirational goal is to develop productive teams and engaged cultures.



### Meet Paul, the Committed Leader

Paul a GM, describes his earlier leadership style as 'Fix-it man'. His sense of identity came from being able to fix problems and resolve issues for people. Prompted by feedback he was getting from his team, including terms like 'micro-manager', 'highly opinionated' and 'controlling', Paul engaged a leadership expert who encouraged and supported him to adopt a coaching approach.

Now (some years later), Paul's style is 'listen, coach and influence. Assist my direct reports to come to conclusions themselves'. Coaching skills are near the top of his leadership toolkit.

Of course there are times when he directs, times when he mentors, and times when he applies other leadership styles. Mostly though, he coaches: in a formal sense through a career development

conversation or simply informal corridor conversations on his way around the organisation.

Paul has developed a library of questions that prompt his managers' thinking and lead them to their own insights. This builds his direct reports' confidence that they are capable and are growing as leaders.

Engagement scores are high across Paul's teams, with excellent productivity measures to match.

It's important to note that Paul hasn't always led in this way. In the first year in this role he struggled to connect with some of the managers who report to him; he was often stressed and felt a great need to know all the answers. His development to Coaching Leader has been deliberate and was achieved progressively over time.

The Committed Leader embraces coaching skills and makes them their own, adapting to what's needed by the people, the situation and the task. This leader makes judgments in the moment and choicefully applies coaching principles to their leadership to build **Engaged** and productive teams.



## The Leader Who Asks

At the top of the Coaching Leader Ladder we have the **Leader Who Asks** who may be highly skilled in their primary expertise (marketing, engineering, IT etc.), and who is also **SKILLFUL** in applying a coaching focus.

The way **Leaders Who Ask** show up—their presence as well as the approach they take—optimises the potential of individuals in the team, and of the team itself. Their leadership builds highly productive teams and creates **Fearless Cultures**.

In Fearless Cultures there are high levels of engagement across all levels (as contrasted to the average Australian workplace with engagement around 24%<sup>4</sup>). With higher **engagement** comes better workplace relations, reduced sick leave, greater discretionary effort – the list goes on... In Fearless Cultures, people and teams take **accountability** for their behaviour, their work and their results. Fearless Cultures are productive cultures that people want to belong to.

Their ability to draw out the wisdom from others means **Leaders Who Ask** lead dynamic and challenging meetings. People who work with these leaders feel they are being invested in. Their clients enjoy working with them because they learn something beyond the agreed transaction.

**Leaders Who Ask** have the courage to connect deeply, lead fearlessly, and they (and their teams) achieve results.



### Meet Frank, the Leader Who Asks

Working in an international finance organisation, Frank is the type of leader who instills confidence in others, up and down the chain of command. He is often brought in to turn around an operational division or bring a major project back on track. While he is very results driven, his coaching approach raises the performance of people – individuals and teams—beyond what even they think is possible.

Frank is focused and calm. He is aware there are multiple ways to attain success. He knows that good people are often their own harshest critic and helping people uncover their own learning is far more powerful than allocating blame and judgment.

He is confident and steadfast as a leader, and at this

same time will admit he doesn't have the answers and can show vulnerability.

Frank asks the kind of questions that get you thinking way beyond the minutes of the conversation. One of Frank's special skills is silence; he asks a question and waits patiently while you gather your thoughts (and sometimes muster up courage to voice what you are thinking) and respond. He never fills the space, waiting instead for others to take up the invitation.

Frank knows his key role, as a leader, is to develop others. His presence and approach brings out the best in people and teams, and he builds Fearless Cultures along the way.

“Before you are a leader, success is all about growing others.”

Jack Welch (former Chairman and CEO of GE).

**Leaders Who Ask** know this. Technical skills are the ticket to play, not the road to success. Coaching competencies help **Leaders Who Ask** achieve success through growing others.

## What about you?



?

Now that I have briefly explained each level of the **Leaders who Ask** Ladder,

- Where are you now on the **Leaders Who Ask** Ladder?
- Which level do you want to reach and what would that give you?
- What benefits would it bring to your team?
- How would that advance the purpose of your organisation?

# What could be possible?

What we have now isn't where we would like to be. Sometimes it's useful to contrast the current situation with what we could have instead, when we have **Leaders Who Ask**.

FROM Leaders who tell	TO Leaders Who Ask
Leaders who tell their direct reports what to do	<p><b>Leaders Who Ask offer thought provoking questions</b> that get people thinking and developing their own solutions. They inspire commitment and ownership through empowering others.</p>
Individuals disengaged (and possibly feeling physiologically unsafe at work)	<p><b>Individuals engaged and feeling safe. Leaders Who Ask</b> maximise engagement and create the culture where people feel safe, and speak up when things aren't right. Individuals and teams are confident to contribute and empowered to co-create solutions.</p>
Leaders avoiding challenging conversations	<p><b>Conversations that build and not bruise. Leaders Who Ask</b> are skilled and confident to have the conversations that matter – discussions that in the past may have been pushed underground, and expressed in unprofessional and potentially harmful ways.</p>
Poor attitude and performance tolerated	<p><b>Leaders holding people to account. Leaders Who Ask</b> take responsibility for their own behaviour, and coach others to improve.</p>
Organisational values on the walls	<p><b>Organisational values lived. Leaders Who Ask</b> shift culture by modelling the desired behaviours, and supporting and coaching others to live them too.</p>
Lack of Teamwork	<p><b>Teams co-creating the future. Leaders Who Ask</b> use the coaching skills in their leadership toolkit to bring people together to work inclusively and all voices are heard, and team KPIs can be achieved.</p>

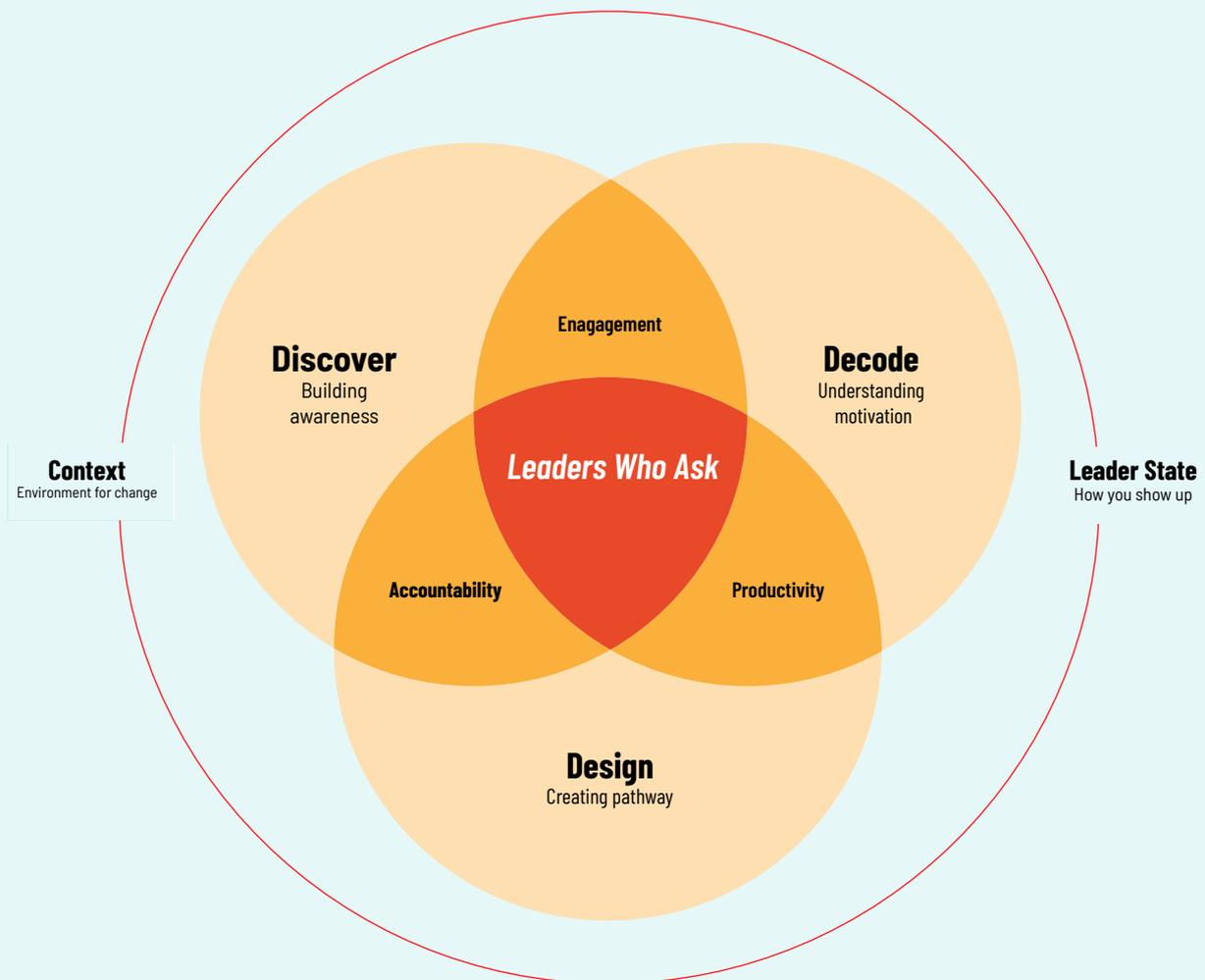
*When it costs too much to maintain the status quo, you need Leaders Who Ask to build a Fearless Culture.*

# Creating a Fearless Culture

There's a concept in genetics referred to as Methylation. It's a process where you don't have to change the sequence of the gene to change the function of the gene. Instead a chemical layer or coding turns up or down the expression of a given gene. In other words, by changing the chemical and social conditions, the full expression of gene ('turning on' the gene, for the non-geneticists amongst you) can be stimulated.

Think about ants. Methylation changes the chemical and social conditions, and triggers growth in ants. The result is more ants of bigger sizes than would otherwise occur, through encouraging the expression of growth genes. Interestingly, the ants' growth does not happen beyond the normal growth range: we don't get 2-foot long ants, but we do get more big ants within the standard range of ant sizes <sup>5</sup>.

The coaching leader 'methylates' **engagement, accountability, and productivity**, creating the conditions for these attributes to be fully expressed and developed within the 'normal range' of abilities. By adding coaching skills to their leadership toolkit, and bringing more *ask* and less *tell* into their leadership style, **Leaders Who Ask** methylate for a Fearless Culture.



<sup>5</sup> Professor Ehab Abouheif from McGill University, Quebec Canada was interviewed by Red Symons Breakfast show ABC Radio 774 Melbourne on 24 March 2015. Accessed 4 April 2015 blogs.abc.net.au/files/red-with-ehab-abouheif.mp3

## Leader State: How You Show Up

### How are you showing up?

How you show up as a **Leader Who Asks** matters more than any coaching framework you might follow (and I say that even though my framework is a good one!). Your 'being' is as important as what you know and what you do. Your state matters!

Many coaching books and programs teach a coaching model: what to say, when to say it, and what to do next—as if that were the critical factor. While a framework is important and gives structure to the conversation, it's NOT the most important thing. We have all seen frameworks applied well without success. A coaching structure followed without rapport, and a framework well applied without connection, will not take you towards a Fearless Culture!

Your state is the critical factor here. In fact, it's so important that when I work with leaders in **Leaders Who Ask** approach, we focus on the Leader State and the competencies that underpin the leader state, almost as much as developing their skills in using a coaching framework.

There are twelve core competencies for **Leaders Who Ask**. Your state, as a coaching leader, will influence the success of any coaching conversation. You are part of the problem and a key to the solution.

### Core Competencies for Leaders who Ask

	about you	about them	about the space	about the relationship
<b>being</b>	<i>commitment</i> <b>COURAGE</b> heart <i>fear</i>	<i>openness</i> <b>CURIOSITY</b> mindset <i>judgement</i>	<i>understanding</i> <b>COMPASSION</b> mindset <i>indifference</i>	<i>growth</i> <b>BELIEF</b> opportunity <i>stagnation</i>
<b>knowing</b>	<i>resources</i> <b>CONFIDENCE</b> faith <i>struggle</i>	<i>intention</i> <b>FOCUS</b> awareness <i>behavior</i>	<i>vulnerability</i> <b>UNCERTAINTY</b> truth <i>arrogance</i>	<i>outcomes</i> <b>PURPOSE</b> direction <i>wander</i>
<b>doing</b>	<i>insight</i> <b>LISTENING</b> presence <i>transaction</i>	<i>connection</i> <b>RAPPORT</b> relationship <i>distance</i>	<i>ask</i> <b>QUESTIONS</b> punctuation <i>tell</i>	<i>agile</i> <b> GROUNDED</b> responsiveness <i>fixed</i>

## Context: Environment for Change

### What's the environment for change?

Change does not happen in a vacuum. The context shapes everything, including the purpose of the conversation. Context creates the frame through which the development is shaped and the coaching conversations take place.

**Leaders Who Ask** understand and leverage the environment for change and are tuned into their own context as well as the context of the team.

## Discover: Building Awareness

### What's the problem?

Awareness precedes change. The coaching leader knows that discovery is a critical first step—with no awareness there can be no development. The first step is to increase awareness of what's really happening and the implications of this.

This might be awareness of an individual team member who is being coached, or the whole team. You may be building awareness around a skill gap, a behavioural issue, a flaw in the process, a deliverable running behind schedule, or the outcomes to be achieved from this team meeting.

With awareness comes choice, and the opportunity to make new decisions and form new behaviours.

## Decode: Understanding Motivation

### What's the cause?

Once there is awareness around the situation, you can progress to supporting them in understanding their motivation. This requires going beyond the behaviour we see to exploring the intention behind the behaviour.

All behaviour is motivated—driven by conscious and below-conscious drivers. The better people (individual coaches and groups) understand their drivers, the more able they are to change.

## Design: Creating Pathway

### What's the action?

Awareness and understanding is useful, and yet without action nothing changes. Design is about devising a plan of action. **Leaders Who Ask** support individuals or teams to create their own pathway, a plan that is connected to personal and business objectives.

Equally important is supporting the implementation of the plan, providing feedback, enhancing accountability, and celebrating success.

# What about the brain?



Recent advances in neuroscience provide insights into the biology of questions and answers, and how as leaders, we can leverage the power of ‘asking’.

Many problems can be solved by taking an analytical approach, and systematically working through the problem and possible solutions. The types of problems that are best solved with a coaching approach often require a different way: a new way of thinking about the problem and the solution. The questioning associated with a coaching leadership style helps find a fresh approach that generates a new understanding, and that’s where insight comes in.

When people solve a challenge for themselves—rather than being ‘told’—‘insight’ is involved. Insight is that sudden understanding—a ‘Eureka’ moment—when the brain takes seemingly unrelated ideas and puts them together in new ways to reach a new understanding.

Insights engage the brain’s reward systems and trigger a release of dopamine: a neurotransmitter associated with the brain’s reward system known as a ‘happy chemical’<sup>6</sup>. The simple act of searching for our own answers is rewarding to the brain.

Insight activates the hippocampus, the area of the brain responsible for long-term memories. Insights are memorable because there is an emotional component; the amygdala—the part of the brain responsible for emotional arousal—is engaged.

Memory is also augmented with insight because we make rich neural connections to things we already know.

Problems solved via insight support application of the solution more broadly. The ability to generalise occurs when we are able to ‘recognise new patterns in the problems we encounter and strategies we use to solve them’, and to recognise this in subsequent situations<sup>7</sup>. So, one insight can address multiple challenges across different time and context.

What does this mean? Simply that people are much more likely to remember and own things they have worked out for themselves, rather than things we tell them.

This is why we need **Leaders Who Ask**.

<sup>6</sup> Neuroleadership Journal, ‘Why insight matters’ by Josh Davis, Christine Chesebrough, David Rock, and Christine Cox, Sep 2015 page 6

<sup>7</sup> Neuroleadership Journal, ‘Why insight matters’ by Josh Davis, Christine Chesebrough, David Rock, and Christine Cox, Sep 2015 page 5

# Dispelling the 3 Myths about *Leaders Who Ask*

## 1 Leaders Who Ask must coach

In the late 90s and early 2000s, many organisations ran ‘leader as coach-workshops’ for their managers. The idea was that every manager should be a coach. Wrong! The idea that leaders should coach in all situations is almost as flawed as the idea that leaders should act in a dictatorial way all the time.

To build Fearless Cultures, leaders need to add coaching skills to their existing leadership toolkits and choose when to use elements of coaching skills right across their existing leadership styles. We’re talking about complementing a leader’s skills and not overwriting them.

## 2 Coaching skills are for one-on-one formal conversations only

Coaching skills make formal one-on-one conversations flow, and the leader is much more likely to get an outcome that both parties are committed to and will see through. That’s only one of the many ways in which coaching skills can be applied. Coaching skills allow **Leaders Who Ask** to make an instant connection in a quick corridor conversation, getting outcomes that in the past might have taken multiple conversations, over many weeks.

Coaching skills will ensure that the leader creates clarity about the intention of a meeting, and then is able to facilitate a good conversation so that everyone feels heard and has commitment to decisions made.

Coaching skills will help a leader coach himself through overwhelm or through a sticky situation. Coaching skills can be applied in a broad range of leadership challenges.

## 3 Culture change starts and ends at the top

Typically, culture change does start at the top, and the ongoing support and modeling of the desired culture by the senior leadership group is critical. What is also critical is that leaders throughout the organisation understand the vision, and the values and the expected behaviours, and can coach to that throughout the organisation. Culture is the sum of every little thing we do each day, and **Leaders Who Ask** create culture change momentum through formal interactions as well as formal conversations.



## Are you ready to build a Fearless Culture?

Leaders with coaching skills in their leadership toolkit – **Leaders Who Ask** – can build a Fearless Culture. Research undertaken by Bersin by Deloitte<sup>8</sup> found that organisations where senior leaders ‘very frequently’ coached had 21% higher business results. This research also stressed the importance of providing skills to leaders. Organisations within their sample that were highly effective at teaching managers to prepare for the coaching relationship were approximately 130% more likely to have strong business results.

Fearless Cultures are developed by leaders throughout the organisation bringing out the best in their people through conversations—formally and informally—every day.

**Are you ready to build a Fearless Culture? You need *Leaders Who Ask*.**



<sup>8</sup> www.bersin.com/News/Details.aspx?id=15040 accessed 28/2/17

# Leaders Who Ask - The Program

## Are your leaders:

- operating in 'expert' mode rather than empowering their team?
- lacking ability or confidence to have crucial performance conversations?
- missing opportunities to develop their people on the job?
- struggling to engage their teams?
- trying to 'control' people and situations, and so working harder than they need?

With coaching skills added to their leadership toolkit, your leaders will be equipped to engage, develop and lead their people, and build a Fearless Culture.

## Leaders Who Ask:

- build engagement, boost productivity and develop a positive culture
- are okay not having all the answers themselves, and encourage wisdom from the team
- run effective meetings that leverage input from everyone present
- have outcome-focused, targeted and empathetic performance conversations
- lead engaged teams who achieve their KPIs
- build Fearless Cultures.

The **Leaders Who Ask** program is for leaders who are ready to lead fearlessly and engage fully by adding coaching skills and qualities to complement and extend their leadership style.

We wanted to restructure the way performance management is handled across Tennis Australia – shifting from an annual ordeal to ongoing and meaningful development conversations embedded into the culture. This program has provided a great start. It has given leaders a new mindset that is more collaborative and empowers team members to problem solve and set their own path.

Jaquie Scammell  
 Director Customer Relations - Tennis Australia

**Interested? Let's talk.**

## Profile - Corrinne Armour

Corrinne challenges people to play their big game through Fearless Leadership.

A well-recognised instigator of change and growth, she empowers leaders to realise the potential in their careers, teams and organisations. Corrinne draws on over 15 years' experience in the corporate world heading large teams and projects with budgets in excess of \$80 million. She knows, firsthand, the practicalities of juggling multiple priorities and perspectives.

Additional to a science degree and postgraduate business qualifications are her impressive accomplishments as a registered Project Manager with the Australian Institute of Project Management, an accredited Professional Certified Coach with the International Coaching Federation, and a certified Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Practitioner.

Some of Corrinne's greatest wisdom (and stories) come from living and working in a jungle refugee camp at the edge of a war zone where she gained powerful insights into Fearless Leadership and an active passion to enable others to fulfil their potential. Married to an ex-freedom fighter and mother of two daughters, she appreciates the importance of balance in a team.

Corrinne is a dynamic speaker and influencer. A leader of leaders, she is well versed in leadership theory with a natural ability to inspire and equip others to uplift and unite the most dysfunctional of teams and challenge them to build engaged, productive teams.

Honest, empathic and results-focused, Corrinne helps you leverage your team's diversity and collective brilliance to establish a leading edge that carves out your organisation from its competitors. Her Fearless Leadership framework is innovative and trusted, informed by positive psychology and underpinned by Neuroscience.

Renowned names attest to the success of her approach including Bendigo Bank, Bank Australia, Royal Children's Hospital, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Worksafe, NAB, Dulux Group, Griffith and Monash Universities, and numerous local councils.

Corrinne's latest book **Leaders Who Ask: Building Fearless Cultures by telling less and asking more** was recently released. She is also co-author of **Developing Direct Reports: Taking the Guesswork Out of Leading Leaders** and two specialist texts in human behaviour used by coaches and consultants worldwide.

**Let's talk**



### Get in touch

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